Night Scenes of Scripture

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NIGHT SCENES OF SCRIPTURE.

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Night Scenes of Scripture

SEVENTEEN BIBLE NIGHT SCENES,

ILLUSTRATING AND ELUCIDATING VARIOUS TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL.

BY

W. T. P. WOLSTON, M.D.,

Author of "Behold the Bridegroom"; "Another Comforter"; "Simon Peter: His Life and Letters"; "Young Men of Scripture"; "Rest for the Weary," &c. &c.

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PREFACE.

THE Gospel Addresses which form this little volume were taken down, in shorthand, as delivered. They have been revised, and are now sent out, with the prayer, and hope, that God may use them to arouse the careless, and help the already awakened.

They are but efforts to present the gospel in various aspects, and from different points of view.

May the gracious Lord be pleased to bless their publication to the help of souls, hungering and thirsting for "the unsearchable riches of Christ," even as, in His infinite grace, He blessed and saved the Author, thirty-five years ago this day.

W. T. P. W.

46 CHARLOTTE SQUARE,
EDINBURGH, 16*th December* 1895.

FOREWORD

The reader may wish to know something of the author of this book, W. T. P. Wolston, M.D. He was saved as a young man and was much devoted to the spread of the gospel of the grace of God. He valued it greatly, as that which had met him in his own deep need, and was always glad for an opportunity to tell it to others. He lived in Edinburgh, Scotland; and there, in spite of a large medical practice which made great demands on him, he was never too busy to stop and relate the gospel to a needy soul. He also found many opportunities to preach the gospel before large audiences, and it is said that for many years he preached the gospel somewhere every day.

From one preface in his books, dated December 16, 1892, we learn that he was saved exactly thirty years prior to that date, or on December 16, 1862. From another preface, dated August 1, 1913, we learn that he was still going on in the Lord's service, twenty-one years later.

Many books and tracts came forth signed W. T. P. W., and we believe they were much used in presenting the gospel simply and clearly so that many anxious souls found peace through reading them. They were also used to awaken careless souls to their need of Christ, while many young Christians who had opportunities to preach the gospel found much helpful material in them. His clear elucidation of the incidents of Scripture are still rejoicing the souls of many Christians.

Many of his books are corrected notes of his gospel addresses, and this one is no exception. We have no way of knowing how many editions of these books have been printed, but as we send this edition forth in 1962, we do so with a desire that the Lord may use it with blessing to many souls—both saved and unsaved.

1962 Paul Wilson

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Night Scenes of Scripture.

CHAPTER I.

A Night in Bethlehem.

INCARNATION.

Luke i. 26-38, ii. 1-21.

THE night scenes of Scripture are exceedingly interesting, but the one that is before us this evening, I need scarcely say, must outstrip and exceed every other in interest; and for this reason, that it is connected with the birth of the Son of God into man's world for God's glory, and the blessing, and redemption of man. The moment in the history of this scene had come of which the apostle Paul says: "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. iv. 4, 5). Think of it: the Son is sent to win sons! Oh! it is wonderful.

Now you might ask, What do you mean by "the fulness of time"? Well, it was clearly the moment when the probation of man was over. The

first man had had a fair, full, and complete trial. Tried in innocence, he had fallen, and become guilty: tried without law, he was lawless: tried under the law, he had broken it. God had one resource left—the secret thought of His heart from eternity—it was to send into this scene His own Son; His own beloved Son became man, that, as man, He might bless and redeem man, fallen man, and bring him to God. Man with all his learning, all his inventions, all his searchings, had not found out God. He had lost God through the fall—the fruit of sin—and he never found Him again. Even the law did not meet his case, for the law was not the revelation of God. The law was the declaration of what man ought to be, not the revelation of what God is.

You may turn round and say to me, But did not man know God in creation? To a certain extent clearly, and therefore he is without excuse, as the apostle puts it in Romans i. 20. His eternal power and Godhead are most surely to be known by creation, but that is not what He Himself is. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Ps. xix. 1); but that is not Himself, that is not God. I might show you one day in a certain building a beautiful picture, and as you stand before it with admiration you exclaim: What a marvellous artist! What conception, what artistic power, what skill with the brush, what a touch that produced such a picture! I turn round and show you an exquisite piece of sculpture that came from the same hand, showing that it could use the chisel as well as the brush. And again you exclaim, What a wonderful man! Yes, I say, but he drinks like a fish, starves his children, beats his wife, his life is a scandal

to the whole neighbourhood. In spite of his pictures and his sculpture, his moral character is of the very worst kind. Thus, you see, you do not learn the man by his works.

Neither can God be fully known by His works. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John i. 18). If there be a man here to-night who supposes that he can learn to know God apart from the Blessed One of whose birth we have been reading, depend upon it, my friend, you are profoundly mistaken. God is not to be known save in the person of this Blessed One, whom the second chapter of Luke introduces to us as the Babe in Bethlehem.

Now see how beautiful are the circumstances connected with the introduction of the Saviour into the world. Luke i. tells us how the angel Gabriel visits Mary in Nazareth. He salutes her, and she is troubled by the salutation; but the momentary trouble produced by this distinct visitation from God is banished by the angel's words: "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God;" and then follows the message: "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS." It was a revelation to her. And let me say, beloved friends, if you are ever converted, and saved, you will have a revelation likewise: it will be a revelation from God of your state; and if you have not got it yet, may God give it to you now.

Well, Mary gets this revelation that she will have a Son, and call His name Jesus. You know the meaning of that name—Jehovah the Saviour. But

furthermore she learns what this Son is to be: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David." He is to be heir of the Jewish throne. But more than that: "He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." What a surprise to her soul! She was to have a Son who should reign over the house of Jacob for ever! She was to be in this way connected with One—a Man in this world—who, while her veritable child, was yet nevertheless the Son of the Highest, and was to have a Kingdom that would never end. Marvellous revelation! And I am in no wise surprised that in pious ignorance Mary asks this question, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" God gives her an answer through the angel: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Never had woman in this world, and never can woman again in this world, have such a revelation as is here given to Mary. But, while it was marvellous that she should receive it, let us distinctly understand that the revelation she received was not for her alone: it concerned you and me, as the next chapter will show us immediately. Mary's answer is very beautiful: she received the revelation in simple faith: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her."

Now, if we turn for a moment to the Gospel of Matthew, we shall find there another very interesting scene in connection with the birth of the Saviour, because there we are introduced to Joseph, the

reputed father of Jesus, as men would say, and we find the Holy Ghost telling us there (chap. i. 18): "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: when as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost." There had been this marvellous conception. It was of course a miracle: it was the direct intervention of God not alone to display His own glory, but to carry out His purpose and thought, and that there might be in this scene One, and the only One, who could meet man's need, and man's state as a sinner. He was to be here not alone to reveal God to man, but to bring man to God. Consequently His mission is stated here in brief and concise language.

But first observe Joseph's conduct. Being a just man, and not willing to make his wife a public example, he was minded to put her away privily. You must bear in mind that Joseph and Mary had been a long time espoused, and, by Jewish law, if two were espoused, any fruit that came in the way of nature was regarded as their mutual offspring. Therefore Joseph concluded he would be regarded as the father of this unborn child. Yet he was not hasty or precipitate. He had not got the jealous nature that many a man would boast of, and did not act with that rashness that others even would admire in such circumstances. It is well to think matters well over when a difficulty crosses your path.

"But while he thought on these things, behold the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived (begotten) in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she

shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (vers. 20, 21). Observe the difference between the message to Mary, and the message to Joseph. The mother of Jesus hears of His greatness: He was to be called the Son of the Highest, to have the throne of David, to reign over the house of Jacob for ever. The reputed father of Jesus hears that He is to be a Saviour. And did not Joseph know that he needed a Saviour? Indeed he did. And furthermore Mary knew it too, for in that same first chapter of Luke she says, "My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour" (ver. 47). How sweet it is that before the child was born God should give Him this name—"JESUS"—Jehovah the Saviour. Blessed news for sinners! Charming name: none other so sweet. Do you not love the name of Jesus? Thank God, I do. Does not your heart respond as you hear that name? It has been the resting-place of myriads of troubled anxious souls in days gone by, and it can give rest to every such one to-day. Every other name will perish: the name of the mightiest man that ever appeared in this world will pass away, but the name of Jesus shall endure for ever. The enemies of the Lord said, "When shall he die, and his name perish?" (Ps. xli. 5.) What does God say? "I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations; therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever" (Ps. xlv. 17). "Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." Thus we learn two things. The name

Jesus, given to this unborn child, speaks of His being the Saviour, and furthermore His birth was the fulfilment of a prophecy, well known to Joseph, that in His person God was going to visit the earth.

Now we pass to Luke ii., and see how all this was brought about. There had been a remarkable prophecy in the Old Testament, which I daresay is familiar to most of you. The prophet Micah had announced: "But thou, Bethlehem-Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah v. 2). This scripture plainly declared that Christ should be born in Bethlehem. I do not know whether you have noticed the meaning of the word, but it is very interesting. Bethlehem means "The House of Bread." And, oh, beloved friends, has not Bethlehem been a very House of Bread for hungry sinners for eighteen long centuries? Thank God, it has. From that spot came out the living bread, the bread of God. That scripture was so well known that when Jesus was born, and the wise men came from the East to look for Him, the scribes could quote the passage, and tell Herod that Bethlehem was to be the birthplace of Messiah (Matt. ii. 5, 6).

But how was this to be brought about, seeing that Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth, scores of miles away from Bethlehem? How then was the Scripture to be fulfilled? Oh, how little men think that God is behind the scenes, and quietly overrules what takes place on the earth. The Emperor of Rome, Cæsar Augustus, became suddenly possessed of the idea that he would like to know the extent of his dominion

and the number of his subjects, and he determined therefore to have a census taken. He sends out, in the pride of his imperial majesty, an edict that the people are to be numbered. Very natural for a king to like to know how many people he reigns over. But in this instance the emperor would know, not only the numbers, but the nationalities of those over whom he reigned; and consequently, when the order went out for this census to be taken, every man went to his own city. So absolute was the edict that every Jew, no matter where he lived, was bound, under terrible penalty, to go up to his own city to be enrolled.

See how God steps in and uses the pride of this godless monarch in Rome to accomplish the words of Scripture. Scripture is always true. I know we live in a day when men profess to find faults and flaws in Scripture. You may depend upon it, the faults and flaws are not in the precious Word of God, but in the men themselves who look at it. If I point out a certain thing to a man, and he says, I do not see it, does that prove that the thing is not there? No; all that it proves is that it is not visible to him. It may be there, and the reason he does not see it is some fault in his own vision. I think there is something lovely in the way in which God has His eye upon what takes place upon earth, and moves everything in His own quiet unseen way, to bring about His own blessed purposes.

Well, Joseph went up "unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David), to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child" (Luke ii. 4, 5). I do not know whether you have observed

what the second verse says: "This taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria." It would thus appear that the census was not made at all at this time; it fell through. Although the emperor had commanded it, and put everything in motion to get the census taken, for reasons of policy it fell through—was countermanded—and it did not actually take place till ten or fifteen years afterwards. However, the commandment sufficed to bring about the fulfilment of the Word of God, and, as Micah by the Spirit had said that Christ should be born in Bethlehem, the world's machinery was allowed to be so moved and ordered that His mother must needs travel thither to obey an earthly ruler, and thus He was born there.

Now look at the manner of His birth: "And so it was, that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered; and she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." Now think of what we have been looking at touching this Blessed One, what we have been hearing from God's Word concerning Him, what He was in Himself, and what He was to be, the Son of the Highest, the King of Israel, the Prince of Peace, the Lord of Life, the King of Glory, God's own Blessed Eternal Son! Think who He was, and what He was, and whence He came, and why He came; and then travel in your mind to that little city of Bethlehem, and see there that lowly carpenter, with his espoused wife, shut out of the inn where travellers are generally received, because it was full, and obliged to take their place in the stable! There was no room for them in the inn, and so Jesus,

the Son of God—the Son of Man—was born in a stable among the cattle.

I daresay somebody will say to me, That was merely a coincidence; doubtless the very fact of the census being taken had brought a great concourse of people to Bethlehem, and Joseph and Mary were late in arriving, and so, the inn being full, they had to find shelter where they could. Well, notwithstanding all that, I have the impression that if Joseph had been a great man, and had come with an equipage, sending an outrider before him, room would have been found for him. I have found many a time that if a rich man arrives at an inn, room is somehow found for him, no matter how full it is. But think who was here; the Son of God was about to be born into this world, and there was no room for Him!

You say it was a coincidence. Well, tell me this: Why has there been no room in your heart for Jesus all these years, no room for the Saviour up to this very hour? Ah! it only means this; there has been no want, no wish for Jesus, no desire to have Him. But if there has been no room in your heart for the Saviour till now, God grant that this night you may make room for Him. My object just now is not to expound this scripture, profoundly interesting as it is, but to bring before you the fact that the Saviour has come into this world; and, just as at that day there was no room for Him in the inn, so now there is no room for Him in the hearts of men.

What a scene that is in Luke xiv. The supper is ready, and the invited guests are sent for, but instead of coming with gladness to the feast, they begin to make excuses. Then the servants are sent forth again, to bring in the poor, and the maimed, and the

halt, and the blind; and after they have been brought in we hear "yet there is room." Luke ii. tells us there was no room for God's Son—the Saviour—in this world's inn; the Lord Jesus when grown up, and entered on His public ministry, tells sinners that there is room in God's house for them. If, alas! there be no room for God's Son in this world, and no room for Jesus in your heart, there is room in God's heart and God's house for you. The sweet and blessed note of the gospel trumpet to-night is, "Come! for all things are now ready"—"yet there is room;" and that is just why I am here, to invite you to the spot where the feast is spread, and where there is still room. But what I want is this, that you may have room in your heart for Jesus.

God grant it may be with you as it was with a man I once met in the city of Chester. On my way to Dublin I stopped for two or three hours, and had an interesting little gospel meeting. After it was over, my host said, "You must be off at once, or you will miss your train." There was no cab on the stand, but a man at the door said, "I know where a cab can be got." Off he went, and very soon found a cab, and we all three got in. I thanked the stranger for his courtesy, and then said to him, "Were you at the meeting?" "Yes," he replied, "and a splendid meeting it has been." "Have you room in your heart for Jesus?" I rejoined. "Well," he replied, "I never had room for Jesus till to-night. The fact is that to-night He made room for Himself, I could not keep Him out any longer." Happy man!

Friend, what have you been doing all these years? Keeping the Saviour out. He has been knocking at your heart for many a long day. He knocked very

hard when that near relation of yours was taken from your side; He knocked again when you had that severe sickness, and scarcely expected to recover, but you kept Him out. He knocks again to-night, and are you going to turn Him away once more and say: "No room, Lord, no room for Thee; no room for Thy love. My heart is satisfied with the world, and the things of this life. I have no time to think of Thee and Thy things." No time for Jesus? Ah! take care, my friend, that it be not with you as with another busy man, a man of immense energy, money-loving, respectable, prosperous. One Monday morning as he was starting to go down to his business, a neighbour came in and said to him, "Have you heard the news? Your friend Mr Brown is dead—died very suddenly." "Dead," he said, "I have got no time to die. I am too busy." As he said the words, he stooped down to tie his boot, and he fell dead on the spot. Yours may be the next death heard of.

Have you no room for Jesus? Room for sin, room for folly, room for pleasure, but no room for Christ! Stay, God speaks to you again this evening. Make room, let Him have room in your heart this night.

Sometimes people think that in order to get converted they must go through a very wonderful process. Now I have been often struck with the simplicity of what is found here in the Word. The wonderful fact has come to pass that the Saviour, the Lord of Glory, has arrived in man's world, and no one knows it. Only God knows it. Heaven does not yet know it, earth does not know it, but God in His grace begins now to send out His glad tidings, and it is beautiful to observe that the people who first received the glad

tidings (and it is true of most of the early conversions to the Saviour) were men fully occupied in business. Ah, I like to see a man converted when his heart is full of the world. Some people think they will turn to the Lord when they are tired of the world, but I think it is a grand thing when you get a man full of the world's pleasures and business, and he hears tidings that turn him right round, and make him drop at once the thing he was most wrapped up in, to make room for the Saviour, and then begin to follow and serve Him.

So was it with these shepherds of whom we read here. They were keeping watch over their flocks by night. Go out into that starlit scene, and see these men busy looking after their sheep, guarding them from wolves and thieves, going on with the dull routine of life—what time have they to think of the Saviour? But, "Lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid." That is always the effect when God begins to deal with a man. The felt presence of God was made manifest. And that is the thing which I covet above all for this meeting to-night, that God Himself will be with the message. I daresay many of you will recollect that when the glory of God went away from the earth (Ezek. x.) it went step by step, as it were reluctantly. But here what do I find? The glory of the Lord revisits the earth in connection with the birth of the Saviour, the Son of God. God's Son had become man's Saviour, God's glory revisits man's earth, and the angels make haste to tell the good news to these shepherds in the stillness of that night lighted up with heavenly brightness. The brightest

light that man could invent or manufacture would be but dusk compared with the brilliant glory which shone that night upon the plains of Bethlehem. No wonder these men were startled. "The glory of the Lord" turned that night into day for the nonce, and we read "they were sore afraid." It is a fine thing when a man is wakened up, and begins to be afraid. The mark of an unregenerate man is that the fear of God is not before his eyes, but as soon as a soul becomes conscious that God is speaking to him, that God is drawing near to him, and addressing him, that moment that soul begins to have this right, this holy fear. Do you know what the fear of God is? It is a fountain of life, it is the beginning of wisdom, the stepping-stone to every blessing.

But immediately after we read that these shepherds were sore afraid, we find that the angel says to them, "Fear not." The moment a sense of the presence of God works the true fear of God in the soul, that moment the gospel comes and takes away the fear. Immediately therefore the angel says, "Fear not, for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy." Here is the gospel proclaimed for the first time on the plains of Bethlehem. What are the good tidings that are going to produce great joy? Tidings of Christ. That always produces joy sooner or later. I never knew a man yet who was really converted to God who did not get great joy. I have known many a person *profess*, without getting any joy, but never one who really came to Christ. I remember a young lady saying to me once, "If I came to Christ, wouldn't I get great joy?" "Yes," I said; "I came, and I found great joy; have you come?" "I have been trying to come," was the reply. Ah, that is quite a

different thing. The one trying to come, has not really come to Jesus.

Look at Samaria when Philip preached the gospel there: "There was great joy in that city" (Acts viii.). When Christ is believed on, and received, there is always great joy; it could not be otherwise. I do not say that the first effect of the gospel is to make a man happy, but rather to make him wretched. And why? Because the gospel tells me of what God is, of His justice, of His righteousness, of His holiness, and it tells me that I am a guilty, ruined, lost sinner, that I am under the judgment of God, on my road to hell, hurrying on to meet judgment. Would that make a man happy? No, the first effect when a man is awakened, and begins to think seriously about eternity, is that he is not happy, but in distress. But I tell you what the effect is in heaven when a sinner listens to the gospel and repents; as Luke xv. puts it, there is "joy in heaven." Heaven begins to rejoice when the sinner begins to repent. If I may so say, when the sinner gets miserable heaven gets happy. When the gospel comes to a man, and he learns himself a guilty sinner, unfit for God, that he cannot meet God's claims, and that God is righteous, and will not abate one iota of His righteousness to let him escape, the man begins to get wretched, and God begins to rejoice. He knows quite well that the man who is wretched to-day, the man who repents to-day, will certainly rejoice to-morrow, so He rejoices. The first effect when the gospel reaches a man is anxiety; it makes him serious; it raises the question of his sins, and guilt, and thus godly, right, and holy fear springs up. What is the next result? The gospel removes the fear: God's perfect love casts out fear, because

fear hath torment. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son the propitiation for our sins."

Well, the angel brings these tidings to the shepherds: "Fear not, for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Oh, what a revelation! A Saviour born, a Saviour for you! I rejoice with great joy to-night that I am privileged to tell you that there has been born in this world a Saviour. Have you appropriated Him? Is He yours? Do you believe on Him? Do you love Him?

He is not now in this world, I quite admit; He has gone back to heaven; He is at the right hand of the Father; but as He sits to-night on the Father's throne, He is still the Saviour. I look up to-night to the throne of God, and whom do I see? The Saviour of whom I read here in Luke ii. Having accomplished redemption, and finished the work which enables Him to act as Saviour, He has gone up to the right hand of God. It is a wonderful thing to find out that there is a living *man* in the glory of God, Jesus, who died and rose again. And therefore I can say to any poor sinner, no matter where I meet him, There is a Saviour in glory for you, if you will have Him. Fear not, troubled soul; fear not, anxious one—a Saviour is born unto you, which is Christ the Lord.

Then the angel goes on to say, "This shall be a sign unto you: ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." What is the result? No sooner has this blessed news come out than "suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory

to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill towards men." If men had not believed the news, angels had ; if earth be indifferent, heaven is not. The heavenly hosts, so to speak, break all bounds, and join this angelic messenger who proclaimed the glad fact which was the fulfilment of the first part of that wonderful verse in 1st Timothy iii. : "Great is the mystery of godliness : God was manifest in the flesh . . . seen of angels." They never saw Him before. The heavenly hosts came trooping down to earth with deep joy. Heaven is full of ecstasy, and why? Because the unsolved riddle of four thousand years is now made clear. How is man to be saved? At length the news, the startling news goes up to heaven that the Son of God has come down to earth, that He has become a man in order that He might die for man, and deliver him. I say it with reverence, beloved friends, that I believe heaven was filled with ecstasy over the manifestation of God down here as the Saviour of poor, guilty, lost man. As to earth, it was utterly indifferent.

Oh, sad and solemn truth! Heaven moved to its centre, and men upon earth, save these few shepherds, untouched. But thank God, they were touched. As they see the glory of the Lord shining round about them, and this beautiful heavenly song falls upon their ears, what effect has this marvellous revelation upon them? They say one to another, "Let us now go even to Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us." They are wise men, they are in earnest, they are a company of thoroughly awakened sinners, deeply anxious, and powerfully impressed by the tidings they have heard. There is a Saviour for them, and they

have learnt where they can find Him. Let us *now* go, they say. Prudence might have said, "Don't be in a hurry, better wait till the morning, lest the wolves should come and steal the sheep;" but faith said, "Let us go *now*." When a man is anxious, he does not put off coming to Jesus, he does not wait till to-morrow. And if I tell you to-night that there is a Saviour in glory for you, do not you put off till to-morrow. What about the sheep? What good would the sheep be if you missed finding the Saviour? What good would the world, or gold, or business, or position, or pleasures, be to you if you missed Christ? "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

There was no unbelieving "if" with these shepherds. They did not say, "Let us go now, and see *if* this thing has come to pass;" but, "Let us now go, and see this thing which *is* come to pass." And they came to Bethlehem, not with the slow laggard steps with which some sinners come to Jesus. "They came with haste." Oh, sinner, wake up now; you have been too long coming to the Lord. I thank God that when the first gospel preaching was given on earth there were ready hearers, and anxious listeners, and souls that were moved by it. "They came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger." They found exactly what God had told them through the angel: the Saviour as a babe lying in a manger. "And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child." They were splendid young converts. They believed the gospel for themselves, and then went and told others about it.

And next they "returned, glorifying and praising

God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them." They had heard that the Saviour was born, they had heard where He was to be found, and they had acted upon the truth they had heard. And when they had heard, found, and seen, they went and told everybody else. And what did they say? Not only we have heard of the Saviour, but we have found the Saviour, we have seen Him. There was no hoping, or fearing, or doubting, or uncertainty. Beloved friends, if you have found the Saviour, go and do likewise. It is a sweet thing when the gospel gets into a man, and the very best evidence that it has is this, that he desires to tell others of it. He would like others to be as well off as himself: he cannot keep it in.

Well, you know, some people say, I never speak of these things. Ah, I am afraid it is because you have nothing to speak about. But I tell you this: if you get Christ in your heart, you will find Christ will come out.

Now, dear friends, let me urge you again, do not put off coming to the Saviour. On the same night that these shepherds heard the good news, they sought and found the Lord: they did not stop till they got to the spot where He was. They received Him, they believed on Him, they rejoiced and thanked God, and they told others of Him too. I do not want any better converts than we have in Luke ii. They are deeply and thoroughly impressed, they believe God's message, and they rest not till they have found Jesus. Ah, my dear friend, have you found Jesus? If so, you have got God's choicest treasure for your everlasting portion; and if you have not got Jesus, you are poor indeed, even if you are the richest man in the town where you live: you are a guilty sinner on the road to an eternal hell. Oh, man, whoever you be, do not

put your head on your pillow to-night without the Saviour; and then to-morrow, if God spares you, tell others, I have found the Saviour. That is the way to spread the gospel.

"Charming is the gospel story,
Love's tale of Jesus, Lord of glory,
The sinner's Friend, seen here on earth;
Bethlehem's lowly manger held Him,
There trustful shepherds sought and found Him:
When angel's voice disclosed His birth.
Hail! hail! Incarnate Word!
'A Saviour, Christ the Lord,'
Hallelujah!
God's Son, in grace, takes here a place,
To *seek*, and *save*, a fallen race.

Perfect love marked all His pathway,
As, through this world of sin and misery,
He hastened onward to the cross:
There in grace for sins He suffered,
As unto God Himself He offered,
Our souls to win by His own loss:
The cup of wrath He drained,
The victory He gained,
Hallelujah!
The crimson wave, His opened grave,
Proclaim Him *mighty now to save.*

By the Father's glory raisèd,
Ascended high, in glory seated,
With joy we see our Saviour now;
Ransomed by His full redemption,
To Him we cry, with adoration,
Worthy of homage, Lord, art Thou:
Both heart and voice we raise
In Thine eternal praise,
Hallelujah!
In Thee we boast, at endless cost,
Jesus, Thou'st *sought*, and *saved*, the lost."

CHAPTER II.

ANOTHER NIGHT IN BETHLEHEM.

ADORATION.

MATT. ii. 1-12.

ALL of you, who are conversant with Scripture, will have noticed the difference between the record given us by the Evangelist Matthew, as compared with that which is portrayed by Luke, concerning the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Both Gospels, however, open with night scenes. Luke, as we have seen, shows us the shepherds of Bethlehem visited at night by the wonderful tidings that to them was "born that day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." His record, while replete with all the surrounding and lovely attendant circumstances, purposely emphasises the truth of the incarnation of the Son of God—of how God's Son came to save that which was lost, by Himself becoming man, that, as man, He might die for men. That is the burden of Luke's Gospel.

Now Matthew's Gospel has a totally different purpose. It is written, not, like Luke's, for the Gentiles, but is clearly written for, and presents Scripture to the Jew, and deals with the earthly history of the blessed Saviour in relation to the Jewish nation. You have

Him, in plain language, presented by Matthew as King of the Jews. Perhaps you have not been accustomed to read the four Gospels, as presenting Christ in four entirely different aspects; but it will greatly help you, if you carry this simple thought with you: that Matthew presents the blessed Lord as King of the Jews—alas, rejected; Mark portrays the perfect servant; Luke unfolds the Son of Man; and John delineates, as far as any writing can, the Son of God.

I want now to bring before you, for a little, man's treatment of this blessed One, who was thus born King of the Jews. The first chapter of Matthew gives us His genealogy—always an important point for the heir to a throne. The second chapter opens with the fact that certain magi, wise men of the East, Gentiles, I suppose, had travelled an enormous distance, and had come up with this query on their lips, "Where is HE that is born King of the Jews?" A very striking question is that—the first in the New Testament; and very different from the first question in the Old Testament. Have you ever observed it? God said to Adam, "Where art *thou?*" Oh! what a question for the sinner—Where art thou? Friend, where art thou? What is your relation to God? The New Testament opens with the question, Where is He? "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" was a question of immense importance. If the One the magi sought be King of the Jews, His right and title to the throne of David must, in the most clear and perfect way, be presented, and the first chapter accordingly gives the genealogy of the Lord Jesus; beginning with Abraham, and coming down through David—the royal line—till at length

we have Jesus born into this scene in the way Matthew describes, and the Scripture was fulfilled—"Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." Wonderful tidings! dear friends. God on earth—God here, on man's earth, and in human form—Scripture fulfilled. The Old Testament, I repeat, clearly and distinctly fulfilled. Astounding news here! that God was on earth in the form of that young child!

He is born, and His name, already foretold by the angels, is JESUS, which means "Jehovah the Saviour." This name is given Him with divine purpose. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus"—why? "For he shall save his people from their sins." I do not doubt that primarily "his people" meant the Jews; but still it is equally true in a broader sense that "he saves his people from their sins," and therefore, the sooner you get among "his people" the better for you. I do not say, The sooner you profess to be a Christian—that would be no good to you—but, The sooner you get among "his people" the better will it be for you.

"Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins," was the word to Joseph. He is born, and receives the lovely—the heaven-born—the charming name of Jesus. Jesus! Do you love that name? Does that name awaken a chord in your heart, my friend? Has the name of Jesus no charm for you? Oh! I pity you if it has not. Jesus! Jesus! It will be the song of my soul for eternity. It will ever be the theme of the saved, and He who bears that name will be the object of worship for ever of all God's people. Oh! my friend, what do you think of Jesus? Perhaps you have never thought.

much about Him. Very likely! for we are not any of us in a hurry to get to Christ. You know the last thing the sinner will do is to go to Jesus. Yes, it is the very last thing. I do not think any sinner goes until he is, so to speak, driven at the point of the sword—that is, until there is soul-exercise—and until he has learned his own good-for-nothingness, and that there is no one to pity him, to help him, or to save him, but Jesus. We learn Him first as a Saviour. I do not think that was the character in which these wise men of the East regarded the Lord. They came up, you observe, "when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa," inquiring, "Where is he that is born *King of the Jews?* for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." A most remarkable mission these men had.

To me there is something exceptionally charming in this picture of these Easterns coming hundreds—possibly thousands of miles—to greet the Son of God, as He entered this world. You may say, What was the reason of their journey? Well, it is pretty well known, that about the time of the birth of our Lord, there was a widespread expectation in the East that a great and mighty being—a certain wonderful King—was to be born into the world. How, exactly, they fixed that particular date is not for me to say; but there is no doubt that the astrologers and astronomers, and the men who interested themselves in these subjects, had fixed upon that moment, towards the close of the reign of Herod the Great, as the time when this wonderful personage was to be born. The Old Testament Scripture had, I doubt not, led to this. That wicked man Balaam—a poor wretch who loved money better than truth, or the service of God—had

been led to say once, as I daresay many of you remember—and he spoke the truth, though he himself was not in any sense under the power of it—"I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh." Ah! take care, my hearer, that you are not Balaam's companion for eternity. You will see Him, mind you, but oh, what an awful thing if it be not nigh. "I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh; there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy the children of Sheth" (Num. xxiv. 17). Yes, he spoke prophetically of that wonderful Star, and no doubt the prophecy was often repeated and never died out, and at this moment, curiously enough, these magi were seeking the truth, and found it, as all earnest seekers are sure to do.

I have no doubt that the hand of God was upon these men, who had travelled such an enormous distance, as they come up and say, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and *are come to worship him*." I know perfectly well that infidels have tried to make a stock difficulty about this star, and the time of the appearing of the star. They say that a new star could not have appeared. My dear friend, you need never trust an infidel in his allegations against Scripture, because he believes nothing, and knows nothing. If you have been getting infidel notions into your head, the sooner you get them knocked out of it the better. The wise men had evidently seen the star. What star did they see? I do not know if I am prepared to prove what star they saw. Very likely they saw two which appeared to them as one.

It has been perfectly well proved by men, who have studied these things, that at this time there was an extraordinary phenomenon in the planetary system, caused by the juxtaposition of two of the largest sidereal bodies, Jupiter and Saturn, which at that moment, in the pursuance of their orbits, came close together. Their relative position on that occasion was such that men looking from the East would see what would appear to be a brilliant additional body in the heavens.

These wise men, doubtless, led by the hand of God, said, The moment has come—the star so long expected has arrived. As it happened, this conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn appeared in connection with the heavenly constellation, "the Fishes," which had long been connected with the Jew (as a fish is the astrological symbol of Judæa). Struck by this fact, the magi were directed to the land of the Jew, and they started off to that land with the query, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" But you see they lost the star. What had become of it? They saw the star first in the month of May. Six months after, in the months of October and November, Jupiter and Saturn approached each other again just at the time when we read they came, saying, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" When they came to Jerusalem, no one could tell them anything about the One they sought, but Scripture had predicted where Christ should be born, so at Herod's command they go to Bethlehem. As they go to Bethlehem they again get guidance, for "lo, the star which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over the place where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding

great joy." The two planets were once more in close apposition, and to the unassisted eye might appear to be one star. I do not say that this coincidence is what the magi saw, but it might be the case, since such was the state of matters in the heavenly bodies when these men came up.

But without doubt the magi are led by the finger of God, as they go seeking Jesus—to worship Him. They are prepared with worship. What a striking thing! Gentiles travelling hundreds of miles to worship Him! And His own people, what of them? Not one solitary person in Jerusalem in the upper circles of religious observance—from Matthew's record—seems to have heard or thought a bit about Him. And yet you remember that Anna, the prophetess, had spoken "of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke ii. 38). There were a few godly people looking for the Messiah, and they recognised Him when He was born, but the king, the priests, the scribes, the elders, the heads of the nation, were not looking for Him; no one knew of Him, or His birth, and the first news they got of the birth of the King of the Jews was a year or so after His birth, and then from the lips of these eastern Gentiles, who had travelled this enormous distance to find Him.

The occasion when these men reach the spot where the Lord was, and present their offerings of gold, and frankincense, and myrrh, was not that of which the second of Luke speaks. I feel certain about that. If you notice men's pictures—and there are thousands of them representing the infant Christ in the manger—they paint the magi in a stable, among the cattle, presenting the Lord with their gifts. All these pic-

tures are wrong. Never trust the pictures. You must go back to Scripture, and it says, "When they were come into *the house*." It was not a stable. Clearly many months had rolled by, after the birth of Jesus, ere the magi came up. There is no doubt about it. It is quite clear if you compare the Scriptures. When the parents of Jesus bring Him to the temple, and Simeon takes Him into his arms, and cries, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation," then immediately after that the family go down to Nazareth (Luke ii. 39). You may say to me, How came it that the Lord was again in Bethlehem? Well, you remember that a godly Jew was bound to appear before the Lord three times in the year—at the feast of the passover, at the feast of weeks—what we call Pentecost—and again at the feast of tabernacles (see Deut. xvi. 16). I have no doubt, therefore, that it was on one of these occasions —probably the passover (see Luke ii. 39)—that He was again brought to Bethlehem, where Joseph's natural links were.

It is very interesting to compare the Scriptures. We live in a day when Scripture is very much doubted; but a little care will prove the accuracy and beauty of Scripture in all points. I do not know if you have ever searched out the history of Bethlehem —if not, I commend it to you. It was the spot where Rachel died. Where Rachel died, Jesus was born. The meaning of it, too, is interesting. It means "The House of Bread." Bethlehem-Ephratah, it is called also, and that is very striking. Ephratah—fruitful; and Bethlehem—the House of Bread. It was indeed fruitful. As a matter of topography, Bethlehem was

a little village pitched on the summit and sides of a mountain ridge, some five miles south of Jerusalem. The steep hill beneath the village was carefully terraced in graceful slopes from top to bottom of the ridge, while vines in festoons, and luxuriant olives, and fig-trees, with dense foliage, gave a fruitful appearance, in striking contrast with the barrenness of the neighbouring desert. In the valleys below, and on a little plain to the eastward, are some cornfields, the luxuriant and beautiful crops of which doubtless gave to Bethlehem the name of "The House of Bread," or, "a fruitful place."

Immediately beyond these terraced vineyards and fields lies the wilderness of Judæa, alluded to in the opening verses of the third of Matthew as the scene of the preaching of John the Baptist. That rigid, barren, arid desert lay right in front, as far as the eye could reach, in striking contrast to this peculiar place of great fertility and fruitfulness at the foot of the mountain, that gave it the name Ephratah. Its history looms largely in Scripture. It was there that Ruth first met with Boaz. It was the House of Bread she got to. My dear friend, have you ever touched Bethlehem—the House of Bread — this spot of blessing, where Jesus was born?

It was at Bethlehem likewise that David was born. Call to mind the history of David in connection with Bethlehem. Think of him as the poet, the warrior, and the king. His youthful surroundings told on his after-life. Bethlehem's mountain ravines afforded solitude and opportunity for communion with God. There he fed his flock, and learned the lessons which the Spirit led him to indite in later days. There he learned to be the man of war, and to be

alone with God—to have communion with God. David was not only born there, but there he was anointed. His chief mighty men were Bethlehemites, and it was for the water of its well he sighed, and not in vain. All these things were but the forecasts and pictures of what was to come. In this same spot Jesus—the Son of David—the Son of God, was born. Bethlehem! thou art indeed the true House of Bread. What a wonderful thing—that in thee the Saviour, the Son of God, should be born! On Bethlehem's plains, where the shepherds kept watch, the gospel tidings were first proclaimed—"Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord."

And now the Easterns come up, and they repair to this mountain village, to find and worship the Lord. Their visit must have been twelve or eighteen months later than the date of the birth of Christ. That is clear, for the time taken to prepare for, and carry out a caravan journey, travelling slowly from the East, would necessarily occupy a good many months. Consequently, when Herod makes his inquiries, he is most particular to find out the time at which the star appeared, and also, you observe when he sends out the terrible edict to slaughter the children, it is against those of two years and under. Many months had rolled by since the star first appeared, and when Herod got the information about the birth of his hated and unlooked-for Rival, he fixed a limit of two years so as to ensure destroying Him. What different effects are produced on souls by the presentation of Christ! "When Herod the king had heard these things, he was *troubled*, and all Jerusalem with him." What a remarkable statement! and what a revelation

as to the state of man's heart. How different is the attitude of the magi. "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are *come to worship him.*" They come with a desire to own Him, and I like to think of them prostrating themselves before Him. Have you ever bowed to Him? If not, bow to-night. Times have altered since then in a certain sense. He is not now a young child. He has died, been raised, and as the exalted Man is on the Father's throne; but He is the same Jesus, and you must have to do with Him. You must have to say to Him. You must bow to His power, in the day of judgment, or bow to Him now in the day of His grace. It would be a good thing if you were to bow to Him just now.

If you have a desire for Him, be encouraged by the example of these men. Let their example cheer you. We read—"When they saw the star, they rejoiced with *exceeding great joy.*" Why? Because they had this thought, We are nearing the object of our quest now. As they travelled over that desert, during the long weary weeks and months, I have no doubt the question rose often in their minds, Shall we find Him? And now that their search is about to be rewarded, they rejoice. "And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child, with Mary his mother, and fell down, and *worshipped him;* and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh." Look at that scene. They came into the house—not a stable evidently—but some house in which Joseph and the mother of the Lord were at this time. They came in, and they fell down before Him. Blessed moment in the history of their souls! They saw the

young child, and they fell down and worshipped Him. They bow in adoration. A beautiful sight for God! A wonderful sight for heaven!

Look at these men. Why are they prostrate before Christ? Has heaven ever seen that sight in your soul's history? Has heaven ever been delighted to find you prostrate before Christ?—not now a young child, but the exalted Saviour at God's right hand, because the work of redemption is accomplished. But the principle of truth is the same. It is Christ that is sought. The same Christ attracts you, and when you bow before Him what blessedness is yours. "They worshipped him, and opened their treasures, and presented gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh." Whatever that may mean, it certainly means this, that the best they had was for Jesus. What have you had for Jesus yet? Unless you have learnt His grace—unless you have learnt the value of His precious blood, and unless you have learnt that He is your Saviour, you have nothing for Jesus. If you learn His grace, what will come then? Out of your heart will come the antitype of the gold, frankincense, and myrrh; you will present to Him the best of everything—the affection and worship of a loving heart.

You will be like the delivered little boy. A train was whirling along on its road, when all at once something gave way, and there was an awful railway accident. A great many people were killed, and the train was smashed. A gentleman, seeking to help the dying and the wounded, found a little boy beneath the wheels of a smashed-up carriage, and drew him out. He came out frightened a good deal, but in answer to the gentleman said he was not hurt. "Oh," said his deliverer, "I am glad of that," and was mov-

ing off. "Stop! stop!" said the little man, "do take this, it is all I have got," and he gave the gentleman a halfpenny. "I hope you will take it, it is all I have got." Ah! do you see? It was all he had got, but he must offer it to his deliverer. You have your heart, and will you not yield it to Jesus? Yield it *to Him*, my friend, not to another. "And they presented *unto him* gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."

Now mark! How much did they offer Mary? Not a grain. Oh no, it is reserved for the advanced nineteenth century, for the enlightened professing Christian of the present day to indulge in Mariolatry —the worship of Mary—and to offer incense to Mary. The magi knew better. Are you one with them? They were *wise* men. Perhaps you do not think they were wise, but they had divine wisdom, and they offered nothing to Mary. There was no worship of Mary then. Take up the latest hymn-books now, some ancient, some modern, some new, others old, and note how much about Mary you will find. I sometimes wonder at the patience of God as His Son is insulted in this way.

But while on this point it is well to notice what significant silences Scripture has.

Did you ever notice in the second of Luke, when Simeon came into the temple and took up the babe Jesus into his arms, the way he worships God? Of Joseph and Mary I read, "he *blessed* them." Simeon could bless them, but did he bless Jesus? Nay, he was divinely taught. If I went into a friend's house, where there was a recently born child, it would be the simplest thing in the world for me to put my hand on the child's head and say, "God bless the child." Simeon blesses the parents. He does not bless

Christ. Ah! no! He knew he had God's Son in his arms. Here these wise men bring all their worship to the Son, and have none for the mother; and if you have been trapped into Mariolatry, God save you. Get down on your knees, own your sin, and make everything of Jesus henceforth.

You may be perfectly sure, if you are seeking Christ, you will find Him. I hear some one say, Oh! I want Christ, but I do not know how to find Him. Do not give up your quest. Have you travelled all that distance, and gone months and months upon the road? then God will bring you to the true Bethlehem, and will bring you into living contact with Jesus. Where is He to-night? He is in the true Bethlehem, the true House of Bread, in the Father's house. If you are wanting Jesus this evening, you follow on, and you will find Him. I will tell you why? He wants to find you. Just as we sang to-night—

> "Jesus, my Saviour, to Bethlehem came,
> Born in a manger, to sorrow and shame;
> Oh, it was wonderful—blest be His Name;
> Seeking for me, for me."

Thank God for that. Ah, "seeking for me." It is God that has His eye upon us. Jesus seeks us that He may save us; we seek Him that we may worship Him. The magi, I repeat, were "*wise* men." They sought, found, and worshipped Jesus. Have *you* been as wise?

CHAPTER III.

A Night of Flight.

REJECTION.

Matt. ii. 13-23.

IT is an intensely solemn fact that Christ is not wanted by the very people that need Him most, unless the Holy Ghost has raised the question of sin in their souls. No matter where you find the Lord drawing near to man, this is ever the case, and the testimony of the wise men to Herod first demonstrates this truth, after the Son of God became incarnate. At the very outset of His course He was *rejected*, and that is why we read in the opening chapter of John's Gospel, "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own (property), and his own (the Jews) received him not" (John i. 10, 11). Whenever you bring in the truth about Christ into the world, whenever there comes the testimony of the Holy Ghost to men of the world—introducing Christ—do you know the effect? What was it then? "When Herod had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him."

Now would you not have thought that they would have rejoiced, and been delighted to hear the news? When they heard the question, "Where is he?"

would you not have thought there would be a desire to know where He was, and who He was? Alas! they were not prepared to receive Him, but they were prepared to say, "Not wanted." Somebody said to me only to-day, "What do you mean by a rejected Christ?" My dear friend, do you know what rejection is? You are not wanted. Sinner! you do not want Him, do you? Indeed, from the date of His birth, I might say, the sad truth came out—He was not wanted. He was needed. But was He wanted by Herod? No! Did the scribes want Him? No! Did the men of the world want Him? No! Do you want Him now? Well, if you are an awakened sinner, you do; but if you are not, you do not. Oh no! Do you know the finest way to spoil a worldly party? Go into the midst of it and speak about Christ. Go into a ballroom, or on to a racecourse, if you like, and witness for Christ, and you will find He is not wanted. The world does not want Jesus.

Some years ago I was in a third-class carriage coming up from Musselburgh on a Saturday night. The train was crowded, and the carriage I was in had five communicating compartments, so there were over fifty people in the carriage. As we journeyed a party of ten who occupied the middle compartment began to sing. They sang very well—Scotch songs—and all the rest of the people in the carriage stopped talking and listened. When we reached Portobello they got out, and other people got in. At that moment I rose and said: "My friends, I have observed that you have been listening with interest to these Scotch songs. I am not a Scotchman, but I should like to tell you about the song of my native land." Everybody looked and listened. Then I went on: "My native

land is heaven. I belong to heaven. I am redeemed by the blood of the Saviour, and belong to heaven. I cannot tell you the tune of the song sung there, but its words are these, 'Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.'" From these words I preached the gospel for two or three minutes, and then sat down. At the same moment the train was drawn up by a danger signal, and there was a dead silence. The first words that broke the silence were, "Is he drunk?" They came from the further end of the carriage, and the speaker was a working-man. "No," said another man, "I do not think he is drunk; I think he is a good man." "He is not a wise man," said a third. "And why not?" asked a fourth. "Because he does not know the time nor the place for these things," said the first speaker. This sentiment was applauded. It just expressed the world's opinion. It never has time or place for Jesus. Sinner, the fact is you have no time for Christ; you have no place for Christ. Alas! you do not want Jesus.

My hearer, you will want Him one day. He was rejected in the day of His birth, and He has been rejected ever since. You say, Oh, things are altered since then. Are they? How many times have I stood with others at the corner of a street, and sought to speak a word for the blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and gathered a crowd around us, and just as we were beginning to get into the sweetness of the proclamation of the gospel, Policeman No. B246 has come along and said, "Move on, please; by the order of the magistrates; we can't have the thoroughfare

blocked." "All right," says some one, and we move on. We go down three blocks, and there, at the foot of a street, is a German band, with the listening crowd reaching over to the other side of the thoroughfare, but you do not find Policeman No. B246 coming and telling them to move on. No, the world likes music, but it cannot tolerate Christ.

Some day you will sadly want Him, friend, when you cannot get Him. You will want to get to Him when you cannot get near Him. But do tidings of Christ trouble you now? You are like Herod. "When Herod heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." I would to God that you were troubled, but on a right account. Would to God that you were anxious about your soul, and crying, "What must I do to be saved?" It would be a good thing for you if you were to heed the Scriptures too. Herod did, but not for salvation. In his trouble, "when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel." It is a very striking thing that if you want solid information you must go to the Scriptures, and even that godless man Herod had to go to Scripture. Whence did Herod get his information? From the pages of Scripture. And where do men get real light and truth to-day? Again, it is from the Scriptures.

Let me exhort you, young man, to hang on to the Bible. Do not let the infidel professors of a theology

that suits the world rob you of a single letter of Scripture. They are very busy, indeed, cutting out this section and that. Believe them not. A young man wrote me a letter last week, in which he stated that he had been filled with doubts as to Scripture, and, strange to say, that it was the teachers of religion who had upset his faith. Well, I have not much respect for such teachers. Men who will teach the truth, and give their hearers undiluted and unadulterated Scripture, are above all things wanted now. The man who tampers with Scripture will do so only to his own cost, for he will find out in the end that he has been tampering with the words of the living God. Thank God, He has long patience with all such, but there comes a moment when His patience is wearied out. My friends, thank God for the Scriptures. All the difficulties of the Scriptures, that men so often speak about, are really not such when rightly understood. Errors do not exist in them. God forbid the thought. There are no errors in Scripture, and the difficulties become the greatest beauties when they are rightly apprehended. There is all the difference in the world between what God says, and what man says.

If you take the finest thing man has made, say for instance the finest work in steel, which has been most highly finished off, and burnished, and put it under a microscope, what a rough, wretched, scratched concern it is. There is no smoothness in it at all. Now I put the wing of a butterfly under the glass; and the more you magnify it, the more beautiful it becomes. That is the difference between what man makes, and what God makes—what man writes, and what God writes. So do not you let into your head

any of the current, flimsy and withal infidel, ideas as to there being errors in Scripture. I will tell you where the error lies. In the vision of the man who is reading it. He has got a spiritual cataract—a blindness about his moral vision ; and he does not see things clearly. Blind men do not see. Every one knows that; and if you think you see errors in Scripture, be sure you have not a clear vision. That is not complimentary to me, you say. I know it is not. I do not want it to be. I want the legs knocked from under you, my infidel friend. I want to see you get down, and say, "Let God be true, but every man a liar." You listen to God, for He speaks the truth, and His truth is exactly just in all its proportions.

It is a striking testimony to the value of God's Word that Herod, in the middle of his confusion, is obliged to turn to, and listen to Scripture. When he gets the knowledge, he turns it to bad account, like many another sinner. "Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search for the young child ; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, *that I may come and worship him also.*" He had no thought of that. That was mere deceit on his lips. He was set on murder, not worship, in his heart. You know what took place. Although on his deathbed, as we are told, he sent out his headsmen, "and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men." Such is man's hatred, that he plots, as soon as he hears of His birth, to cut off the blessed Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now

do you not think it startling when you come to look at Scripture, and at what God tells us about His Son? Yes, it is very startling! He was not wanted. Herod's awful project the magi did not aid in carrying out. When they had seen and worshipped the Lord, they repaired, warned of God, to their own country. Scripture tells us that "being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way."

And when they were departed Joseph had a dream. Joseph got a word from the Lord. And the wise men got a word from the Lord also, and they are obedient. They are obedient as well as worshipful. That same night apparently Joseph had a dream, saw an angel, and heard this word: "Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word; for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother *by night*, and departed into Egypt." Only think that the Son of God, come here to save man, must flee the land of His nativity in order to escape the murderous intent of man. In the darkness of night—to evade observation—a start is made for Egypt. But why Egypt? "That it might be fulfilled, which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son." How wonderful are the ways of God! These words, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt" (Hos. xi. 1), are to be fulfilled. You may say, How can that be? Christ retraces in His own Person the pathway of Israel, and He begins that history in Egypt, out of which He comes when Herod was dead. You then find Him at the Jordan, which Israel also crossed,

And in the fourth chapter of Matthew we find Him in the wilderness, where Israel utterly failed, but He did not fail. In all this pathway of Jesus you are on truly historic ground. He was the true Israel—spoken of so often by Isaiah. Jesus was going to take up in His own history the responsibility of the people of God, and that is what enables Him to be a Saviour. Where every other man had failed, He glorified God, and then, in grace, died for those who had failed, and therefore needed redemption. His perfection as a Man qualified Him to be the Redeemer.

The going down into Egypt, then, was that Scripture might be fulfilled, and the next thing we read is that Herod sends out his bloody edict that another Scripture might be fulfilled. "Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not" (Matt. ii. 16-18; Jer. xxxi. 15). Why Rachel's voice? While Bethlehem belonged to the tribe of Judah, Benjamin was next to them; and you recollect Benjamin was Rachel's son. Bethlehem is first mentioned in connection with Rachel's death (Gen. xxxv. 16-20), and her sepulchre was "in the border of Benjamin, at Zelzah" (1 Sam. x. 2). This bit of land, belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, dipped down into the land of Judah; and about a mile north

of Bethlehem, on the main road from Jerusalem and Bethel, the site of her tomb is marked by a little building to this day. Herod was so determined to sweep the coast clear, that not only in Bethlehem, but in "the coasts thereof," *i.e.*, the parts of Benjamin just alluded to, were the children slain.

The quotation from Jeremiah is a remarkable application of Old Testament Scripture. Rachel had been dead for centuries and centuries, but the Spirit of God puts it in this remarkable way, as if her spirit had risen from the dead; and in connection with this fearful slaughter of so many of her own children, as well as the murdered infants of the tribe of Judah, Rachel's voice is lifted up in weeping, and her cries of sorrow are heard even in Ramah, the chief town of Benjamin. It is highly interesting to see how one passage of Scripture interprets another, and is interwoven with all Scripture. We should not have expected Rachel to meet us here, but, as I said before, Bethlehem was the place where she died. There also her children died, just because it was the spot where her Saviour and theirs, and thank God, my Saviour, was born. Is He your Saviour? If He is, we shall both thank God for Bethlehem by-and-by.

"But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into

the parts of Galilee: and he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene." I may just say you will not find that expression "Nazarene" in the Old Testament; but Nazareth was a despised place, and Jesus was brought up in that despised and disgraced place. Do you not remember what Nathanael says in the first chapter of John, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" What came out of Nazareth presently? The blessed Lord came out. My dear friends, Jesus of Nazareth is a living, and a loving Saviour; but He has been rejected. Rejection met Him at the outset of His history. The world has never wanted Him. From His birth He has been rejected, and now He has gone out of sight.

Jesus the Nazarene—Jesus of Nazareth—the blessed Son of God has passed through this scene—alas!—unloved and unwanted by man. He was rejected. "He came to his own, and his own received him not;" but then, as now, grace has led some to care for Him, and of them it is written, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John i. 11, 12). But though He was a rejected Saviour, He would still be a Saviour. Nothing chilled His love. He is rejected still; but, friend, what I want is your heart for that rejected Saviour now, and if you have never yielded your heart to Him till now, I ask you, Is He not worthy of it? And do you not think the day is coming when God will vindicate Him, and judge the world that has rejected Him, and the man who has refused Him? You may be certain He will.

Let me then urge you to come to Him in time, and confess and own Him now. God give you, my friend, this moment to receive that blessed One as your Saviour. You may say to me, You have not told us much about His work. You have heard plenty about His work, and have not been converted. I want you to see to-night that He is a rejected Saviour. The world has rejected Him, and you either side with the world who rejected Him, or with Him who is rejected. God has yet to settle with you, my friend, as to how you stand in relation to Jesus. God has said to Him, "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

How do you stand in relation to the One who was rejected by the world, which at the outset would not have Him, and at length spat upon Him, scorned Him, and finally crucified Him with malefactors? How do you stand in relation to Him? Yours is an awful case if you are on the world's side, for, mark this, He will appear, He will come back in power and glory; and woe betide the man who is not on His side then. God help you to take your stand with Jesus, and for Jesus. Where is He? At the Father's right hand. Whom will He save? Anybody that will trust Him. Whom will He receive? Any one that will come unto Him. "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." If you are wise you will say to-night, "From this moment forth, Lord Jesus, I will be on Thy side, whoever may be opposed to Thee. Yea, Lord, I am Thine."

CHAPTER IV.

A Night on a Mount.

TRANSFIGURATION.

Matt. xvii. 1-8; Luke ix. 28-36.

DOES it not seem strange to you that of this incomparable night scene, which these scriptures depict, it is written, "They kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen"? (Luke ix. 36.) Does it not seem to you strange that they should be silenced about this wonderful scene? Methinks if I had seen it, my tongue would have wanted to tell others about it. Now, why were they silenced? We read that "Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead." But more than that, I think the truth is they could not understand it. It was a marvellous moment. It was the dead of night, and they saw the mountain top lit up with brightest glory. The glorified body of the Son of Man lit up that scene at the dead of night, when darkness reigned supreme. Do you know, my friends, there is coming by-and-by a wonderful time, when there will be no need of the sun or moon, and of that scene Scripture says, "The glory of God did

lighten it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof" (Rev. xxi. 23). Are you going to be there?

Well, you say, I should like to see what Peter and James and John saw. They saw Christ glorified as a perfect man on earth. We shall never see that, but, thank God, we shall see a scene that eclipses it in a certain sense, and you will find it all described in the end of the twenty-first chapter of the Revelation. It is a scene of holiness, purity, blessing, and rest for eternity, into which every believer through grace shall pass; and what I am gravely anxious about is to get you, beloved friends, to have a title to, and a part in that scene when it takes place. Have you ever yet been brought to know the Lord, because everything turns on knowing Jesus? Everything turns upon your relation to Christ. You cannot be right for eternity if you are not right about Jesus now. Whether you are right about the Lord or not, what you think of Him, what you feel about Him, what your relation to Him is, I do not know, God knows. But what I want to show you from this scripture is, that everything hangs upon your relation to Jesus the Lord; and it is an immense mistake not to be with God in His thoughts of Jesus. It is an immense mistake on every ground not to be in communion with God.

The man of the world is making a huge mistake,—the Christian that is in the world, and is sailing with the world, is making a great mistake, for he has not the thoughts of the Father about the Son. True blessing to-day lies in knowing God's thoughts about Jesus. Perhaps you are enjoying them. You could not fail to enjoy them if you had them, because the revelation of the delight of the Father in the Son fills to overflowing the heart that gets that revelation.

Let us now look at this interesting scene, and you will observe that, what I may call its setting—what it flows out of—is what you find recorded in the preceding part of our chapters regarding the Lord when here. As He passed along one day He turned to His disciples and asked, "Whom say the people that I am?" (Luke ix. 18.) He had gone apart—as this part of Luke's Gospel shows—to pray. This eighteenth verse of Luke ix. is the fourth time in this Gospel where we find this blessed dependent Man in prayer before God. He was alone, that is, He had retired from the world; nevertheless His disciples were with Him. They had watched Him—clearly—in prayer. Then He turns to them and says, "Whom say the people that I am?" He would like to know, for the moment, what they thought of Him. He had been in this scene—I mean in active service—for many months. I speak not of the thirty years' retirement, before He came out into the active service of the gospel. He had been two years and some months before the eyes of the people in His work of blessing and of goodness. He had given full testimony to His mission. The Father too had given His testimony at the moment of His baptism, when you first find Him praying (chap. iii. 21).

You remember that in the moment when He was baptized in Jordan the Holy Spirit fell upon Him like a dove—that emblem of purity and gentleness—not like "fire," but like a dove. The dove had found, so to speak, a resting-place. You will remember also that when Noah sent out the dove from his ark, he sent it out twice, and it came back. And why? Because there was nothing on the water but carrion, and there was no resting-place for the feet of the

dove. At length, on the third occasion, the dove found something above the water as a resting-place; in a resurrection scene she found a place to rest her feet. And long did the Holy Ghost hover over this world before He could find a resting-place. At length He came in the figure of a dove on Jesus. The Holy Ghost had hovered over the world for four thousand long years, and what did He see? Moral carrion everywhere! Mark it, weigh it, challenge it if you like! He had seen nothing but moral carrion. What do you mean, you may ask, by moral carrion? That which is dead, offensive, and only fit for the scavenger. He saw man, every man, in his real state of sin as God sees him.

Read the history of man in the Old Testament. What do you find? God looked down to see if there were any that did good, any that sought God, or anything that was suitable to God. And did He find any such? Nay. "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," Scripture says (Gen. vi. 5). And for four thousand years the Holy Ghost sought in vain for a holy, sinless, spotless, perfect man, on whom He could come and *dwell* in him. I deny not that He did come, in the way of power, on certain men, to do the will and purpose of God. He could and did use evil men, like Balaam and Saul, or godly men, like David and Isaiah; but He only came on them for the time. He never tabernacled with any of them, or abode in them. Sin was everywhere; but at length comes the moment when a sinless, holy Man appears in this scene, and the Holy Ghost falls upon Him like a dove. At last the heavenly Dove has found a resting-place in this world of sin. Ah, it was a marvellous moment.

Why did it not rest on others? There was, you see, sin everywhere. Redemption was not accomplished. The Holy Ghost could only dwell in sinful men where redemption was known, and where the power of the redeeming blood of the Saviour was really applied. But at length there comes One on whom He can rest, in virtue of what He was in His own Person, sinless, the Holy One of God, and upon Him the Holy Ghost falls, like a dove, and *abides* upon Him.

The testimony of God to John the Baptist was—"Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and *remaining* on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." And the Baptist adds: "And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God" (John i. 33, 34). He was a real, true, absolutely perfect Man; but He was a man as much as I am—sin excepted. In the third chapter of Luke's Gospel, you find that He is baptized in Jordan, and while He prays, the heavens are opened, the Holy Ghost descends, and the voice of the Father says, in infinite delight, "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." Now mark this! At that time the Father did not add these words, "Hear him." In the scene I have read to you to-night, there is again the expression of the Father's delight, with the added words, "Hear him." If you have never heeded Him before, now then "hear him." Why did the Father not say so at the baptism in Jordan? If I may so say, it went without saying that others would delight in Him. Man was being tested by Him. A year or so goes by, and then He says to the disciples, "Whom say the people that I am?" They reply, "Some say you are John the Baptist, some say you are Elias, and

others, that you are one of the old prophets raised from the dead." Nobody knew Him. Ah, what a revelation of the heart of man! The Father had declared who He was, and He had come to His own, but His own received Him not. He was in the world, and the world saw His works; but while they saw what He did, they did not know who He was. Do you know who He is? I repeat—Do you know who He is? "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." That was God's word—His testimony to His personal glory; but the miracles He wrought, His mercy and His goodness, and the beauty of His life, had not opened the eyes of the people. They indeed felt that He was, in a certain sense, One whom God sustained; but it was evident they knew Him not as the Son of God; they knew Him not as the One who was to be the Saviour of the world.

He went about doing good—"full of the Holy Ghost," as Scripture says. He opened blind eyes, unstopped deaf ears, made the lame to dance, caused the dumb to speak, bound up the broken heart, set free the captive; and no matter what the misery was that crossed His path at every turn, He met it in the most marvellous grace; and though He blessed, and healed, and helped people right and left by thousands, yet He never urged one such to follow Him—not one. He never told any man who had been healed by His mighty power to follow Him. No, grace does not buy hearts; it wins them. Mark that! Jesus never seeks to compel one to follow Him. If you are not following Jesus, He will not compel you. There is nothing, in that legal sense, compulsory with the Lord. You *may* follow Him. It will be a great mistake if you do not. You may do so to-night, and it

will be blessing for you, for time and for eternity. But mark! He will not compel you. He will bless you—He loves to bless you; but He then says, so to speak, "Go thy way." To blind Bartimeus, He said, "Go thy way." To the healed demoniac he said, "Go home to thy friends." And then there is Jairus's daughter, twelve years of age, whom He raised from the dead. Does He say, "Now that girl must follow me?" Not a bit of it. He says to the mother, "Give her meat," but He leaves her at home. That is Jesus' way. Christ wins hearts, but He wins them by the attractiveness of grace. He wins them by love. There is no *must*. The heart that is acted on only by a *must* is not enjoying Christ's grace. If you are controlled by a *must*, you are a poor miserable legalist, or a self-tortured ascetic, for there is no must where grace is concerned. There is *may*, and then by grace the heart says, *I will;* but there is no *must*.

But, you say, it is written, "Ye *must* be born again." I admit there is a must there. That is the *must* of necessity in regard to new birth—not discipleship. The following of Christ is a beautiful spontaneous act; and you know whether you are following the Lord or not. If not, I hope your heart will be won for Jesus this evening. You may get into fellowship with the thoughts of the Father to-night

The varied answers to the Lord's query, "Whom say the people that I am?" were but guesses—and all wrong. Then "He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Oh, He loved that answer—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." "And Jesus answered, and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh

and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Let me tell you this—you will never learn Christ from the schools of men; you will never learn Christ from the synagogue; you will never learn Christ from the mind. No! If you ever learn Christ, it will be from the teaching of the Father. You will have to get near to the Father. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." No man cometh unto Him except the Father draw him, and of every one that the Father draws He says, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." He came to do the Father's will here, and nothing else. And what was the Father doing? He was introducing souls to His Son. That is what He is now doing. Are you going to be introduced? Introduced! What do you mean? Introduced! My friend, I recollect when God introduced me. I shall never forget it. Do not you recollect, my Christian friend, when you were introduced—when the Father led you as a trembling, wrath-fearing sinner to the Son, and the Son gave you blessing, bringing your troubled soul into rest, and your guilty, sin-stained conscience to peace? I see many smiling faces here as I speak, who are all saying, "I recollect the time when the Lord blessed me." Aye, and you will never forget it. That moment in the history of your soul you will never forget, whatever may have come afterwards.

Then the Lord tells Peter the solemn truth that He must die. Peter does not like that. He could scarce believe it. But the Lord says that He "must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised

again the third day." He unfolds the solemn fact that He must go to death. Although He was in Himself a spotless, holy, sinless Man, upon whom death had no claim, yet He unfolds the purport of His earthly mission—that He was going to die. And why? Because He knew that you and I could never get life if He did not die. Therefore, in heavenly grace, He yields Himself to be rejected, spat upon, smitten, and killed, and raised again the third day, accepting at the same moment on the cross the whole weight of God's condemnation of sin. He knew what was the scene of moral carrion that presented itself to God. He knew every man's sin, and that there was nothing here fit for God. He knew that the first man was utterly rejected of God, and He knew that nothing could redeem or deliver man or bring him to God save His own death, and therefore He brings out distinctly that He must die. This was not pleasant to Peter, and, desirous of saving his Master from shame, he says, "Be it far from thee, Lord." The Lord rebukes him with the solemn words, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

Then the Saviour says, "If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?" Now, I pray you, if you are not yet on the Lord's side, tell me, What is a man advantaged? Young man, what advantage have you? You are in the world, and of the world, and known

by the world to be a worldling. "What is a man advantaged if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away," or "lose his own soul"? as Scripture elsewhere puts it. What is the worth of your soul? The Blessed Son of God gave Himself for my soul; and, if I want to know the value of the soul, I look at the cross, and at this holy, sinless, spotless One going down to death to redeem it. That is the value of the human soul. You perhaps never thought of this before. Let me beseech you, ponder the Saviour's question, "What is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?"

Ah, you say, I have life before me. Have you? Are you sure of that? I see a young man here who is just starting out in life. He has it all before him, and he means to have the world for a time. Stop, dear youth, God may cut you off before you have time to enjoy much of the world's things. Perhaps you reply, I do not think it is likely I shall be cut off. Ah! my friend, did you see those two hearses going along Princes Street yesterday afternoon? Yes! but death is a common thing. Yes! I know it is; but it was the heavy shower that so refreshed the earth, in the middle of last week, that swept these two men whose funeral you saw, into eternity. Poor fellows! they were working in the city drains, and the torrent of rain overwhelmed them ere they could get out. They were caught in a trap, as it were, and drowned. The devil would much like to catch you, my unsaved friend, in a similar trap. And I will tell you more. There is an unyielding and immovable grating at the end of all his traps. Ah! you say, that is where those poor fellows were found, just inside the outlet grating—drowned. Yes, and, sinner, mark you, that is just

where you will be found if you go on in your sins, ruined and lost for eternity. And what then? You will find you were the dupe of Satan. One could not but feel deeply sorry for the poor entombed men, and for those who were left behind to mourn their loss; but what effect has this lesson upon you? Come now, friend, let us be honest. Had it been you who were buried yesterday, where would you be now? In eternity. Face it, and say where. In heavenly glory, cleansed by the blood of Christ? Oh, no! Nobody ever mistook you for a Christian. God knows well, and you know well, you are unsaved. God save you now. You may never get another chance.

"What is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed." Do you hear that? You have been ashamed of Jesus. You know you have been. You ran away if ever you saw a Christian coming up to you to speak personally about Jesus. You were ashamed. Listen. "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and *in his* Father's, and of the holy angels." Oh, then, He contemplates coming back, does He? Yes, He is coming back in His own glory. He is coming back in His Father's glory, and in the glory of the holy angels. But, tell me, will you be with Him then? Who is on the Lord's side? Oh, you say, I hope I shall be on the Lord's side then. But, say, are you on His side now? That is the point. I used to be ashamed of Jesus, and now I am ashamed that I ever was. My dear friend, I hope you may be henceforth ashamed that you have ever been ashamed

of Jesus. Ashamed of Jesus! Ashamed of love! Ashamed of infinite grace! Ashamed of the One who gave up everything for us, who did everything for us, and who fills our hearts full of joy for eternity in the Father's house. Ashamed of Jesus! God forbid that you and I should be ashamed of Jesus.

And now the Lord adds, "But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God." You may say, What did Jesus mean by that? I think the answer is in the next verse: "And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to *pray*." Observe that. This is the fifth time in Luke's Gospel that Jesus is seen praying. "And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering." St Matthew puts it thus: "He was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." By His side you see were Moses and Elias. "There be some standing here," He says, "which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God," or, as Matthew has it, "till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." It is the same thing. The Lord has not yet come in manifest majesty and glory, as King of kings, and Lord of lords, but He will thus come as the Son of Man, and no doubt here He gives His beloved disciples a miniature picture of the coming kingdom. If you have any doubt as to that interpretation, you will have all doubt dispelled if you listen to what one of the eye-witnesses says, for you must observe that the Lord had three men with Him that wondrous night, and they were eye-witnesses of His glory. Moses and

Elias were His companions in that glory. That is what you and I are going to be, my Christian friend. Peter, James, and John were eye-witnesses, and that is what Peter refers to in his Second Epistle, when he says: "Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount" (2 Pet. i. 15-18).

Peter makes perfectly plain what he saw, since he calls it "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Look at this scene. I conclude from the narrative given that it was night, for the disciples had gone to sleep, and they slept long. Clearly they awakened from their sleep confused. The whole circumstances point to this scene being at night. You find the Lord frequently spending the night in prayer. Here He was in prayer, and what took place? While His three disciples were "heavy with sleep" He was transfigured, and "when they were awake they saw his glory." Roused from their slumber, Peter, James, and John saw it. As that Man bent before God on the mountain-top in prayer, the Father expressed His delight in Him, and "he received from God the Father honour and glory." He had travelled three-and-thirty years in blessed dependence on, and devotedness to God, and now from the mountain-top He might have

passed up into heaven unchallenged, and been rapturously welcomed. But if He had gone up into glory then, He would have left you and me behind, for redemption was unaccomplished.

The Father, in this wondrous scene, expresses His delight in Him, He receives honour and glory, and for the time being He has a glorified body. That glorified body illumines—lights up—all that mountain-top, and by His side are seen two men, Moses and Elias, and I need not say with what joy they occupy that place with their Lord and Saviour. Moses and Elias had been pillars in Jewish history. Moses, the lawgiver, had died, and been buried by God's own hand. Wonderful indeed was his history. You know what his great desire was? To go into the land of promise. But God said, "Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto Mount Nebo, . . . and behold the land of Canaan; . . . thou shalt see the land before thee; but thou shalt not go thither unto the land which I give the children of Israel" (Deut. xxxii. 49, 52). Poor Moses! I think he was very heart-broken because he was not allowed to go into the land. If he had gone into the land then, he would have gone into it in very poor company. Where do we see him in this night scene? He is in good, yea, the best of company. He is in the company of the Son of God. Raised by God's own hand he stands with the incarnate Son of God on that mountain top. He got far more than he missed, as the poet has touchingly written :—

"And had he not high honour?
The hillside for a pall;
To lie in state, while angels wait,
With stars for tapers tall;

And the dark rock pines, like tossing plumes,
Over his bier to wave,
And God's own hand, in that lonely land,
To lay him in the grave.

In that strange grave without a name,
Whence his uncoffined clay
Shall break again (oh, wondrous thought !)
Before the judgment day ;
And stand with glory wrapt around,
On the hills he never trod,
And speak of the strife, that won our life,
With the Incarnate Son of God."

The site of the Transfiguration has been supposed to be Mount Tabor, but much evidence militates against this view. We do not know the place except that it was in the Land of Promise, and Moses was there with Jesus, in the company of the blessed Son of God. And Elijah, the prophet-reformer, who had gone up without dying, was there too. Moses and Elias are there as the companions of the Lord, and you have thus a picture of the coming kingdom, the heavenly side as well as the earthly. What is the heavenly side? The Son of Man in glory, and at His side, sharing that glory, one who had died and been raised, and another who had been taken up without dying. That is just what will be manifested shortly. The kingdom of the Father gives us the heavenly side, while the kingdom of the Son of Man presents the earthly side.

But you may inquire, Who form the heavenly side? Those who partake of the first resurrection, those who already have passed into the grave, and whom the Lord when He comes will take out of the grave, "raised in glory" to be with Him in glory. There will be also many alive on the earth when the Lord comes,

and these—changed into His likeness—will be caught up to meet Him in the air. "So shall we ever be with the Lord." Moses is the figure of those saints who have fallen asleep, been buried, and will be raised—mark—"in glory." Moses and Elias in this scene were in a glorified state. That is the point. They appear in glory, and are in association with the Son of God, they are the companions of Jesus. Did you ever think what heaven will be? You get a very beautiful picture of it here. It will be heaven to be with the Saviour.

Fellow-Christian, should the Lord come back to-night, you and I through mercy would not see death, we should be caught up like Elias into glory. That is the Christian's hope. In Peter and James and John you have the earthly side of the kingdom prefigured, while, withal, they are eye-witnesses of their Lord's majesty and glory,—glory which God conferred upon His Son. This was not His intrinsic, personal glory, as the Son of God. It was acquired glory, conferred on Him because of what He was as man in this scene. He had done all for God's glory, and God's glory only, and the answer to this wonderful pathway of humiliation and self-emptiness is that He is glorified as Man, while He stands upon earth. No one surely wonders that He is glorified now. He came from glory, and is gone back to it, and in His cross has opened up the way, and laid the basis, in redemption, of our title, to go there also through His rich grace.

And now we read: "And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." Could

anything be more wonderful? They are talking with the Lord about His death. How striking a theme on that mount of glory! These two men are conversing with Jesus as to His death, while they at the moment see Him glorified. Marvellous mystery! He told them, as He had told His disciples a few days before, that He must die. Why die? Because there is no way for you and me into God's presence except through death. There is no life for you and me except by death; not our own death, but the death of One upon whom death had no claim, and who was going down to die for God's glory, to destroy the power of Satan, and to deliver and redeem man. And Moses and Elias were talking with Him about His death. And do you know what you and I will do in heaven? We shall always be talking either with Him, or about Him, and about His death.

What is the song of Revelation? "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for *thou wast slain*, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." Eternal pæan of the redeemed! The love of Christ will evoke it, for although He said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John xv. 13), yet Christ has laid down His life for us when we were not His friends but were opposed to Him, and when we did not love Him. Could you honestly say that you have loved Jesus? No! Then learn this—Jesus loved you, and, sent of God, He went down into death for you; and therefore death is the basis and groundwork of salvation. It is by His death that our redemption is accomplished. It is by His death that sin is put away. It is by His death that Satan's power is broken, and by which you and I are brought

to God. It is only by His death—nothing but His death.

And now at this moment we are told that Peter, James, and John wake up, for "they were heavy with sleep, and when they were awake they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him." It is all perfectly plain that there will be recognition in eternity. There will be recognition in the Father's house. They knew Moses, and they knew Elias. They confounded neither of them. They were confident about each. I do not think when, by-and-by, we pass into eternity, that we shall fail to recognise each other, for recognition after resurrection is clearly seen here. The relationships of life are for time, but individuality is clearly maintained into eternity, and a very blessed thing for us that it is so. Peter, ever impetuous, and stirred by this marvellous vision, yet not knowing what He said, exclaims, "Master, it is good for us to be here." That was quite true. It was a very nice thing for him to see the glory of the Lord. And you, Christian friend, will say similarly some day, "It is good for us to be here," when you see His glory.

Peter's heart began to get warm, and I see the reason. He saw the Messiah, the lawgiver, and the reformer together, and was charmed. He saw everything that was important to a Jew's mind and a Jew's heart. In Moses he had the lawgiver; by his side was Elias, the prophet and reformer; and, above all, now he sees the Messiah—and to his Jewish mind the scene was so beautiful that he desired to perpetuate it. He spoke out first as they were retreating out of sight. Matthew and Mark do not note this circumstance, but Luke records when Peter said these foolish words: "And it came to pass *as they departed* from him, Peter

said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said." And what had he said? What had he done? He had put the Son of God, the Messiah, Moses the lawgiver, and Elias the reformer, on a dead level. He had equalised them, so to speak. He thought this scene should be perpetuated, and to retain them he would give each a tabernacle. But "while he thus spake there came a cloud, and overshadowed them; and they feared as they (those) entered into the cloud"—Peter, James, and John feared as the cloud enclosed the others. And what was the cloud? The Shekinah—the glory of God. The cloud that had tabernacled with Israel in the days of the wilderness reappeared to guard the person of the Son of God. That cloud bespoke the immediate presence of the Father—was, in fact, the expression of the Father's house, and into it Moses and Elias go. Thank God. That is where you and I, fellow-Christian, are going. And we need not be afraid to go there. If you have the Father's thoughts about the Son, all is right. Moses and Elias had got the thoughts of the Father about the Son. And what is the result? He stoops down and takes them into the cloud. Poor Peter! How foolishly had he spoken, and then must have felt. "Let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias," was his estimation of the comparative value of his Master. You will understand that the Father could not brook this insult to His Son. And immediately there comes out of the cloud this voice, "This is my beloved Son; hear him." Ah! hear Him! Not "Hear Moses." No; his day is gone by. Nor Elijah? No; his day

is also gone by. Hear Jesus, and Jesus only. This is Jesus' day.

Do you think the law, or Moses, can help you? No; they can only condemn you. Do you think Elias can help you? Oh, no! He can tell you that you are wrong, and exhort you to reform, but cannot help you. Elijah may exhort you, and Moses will condemn you, but Jesus only can *save* you; and therefore the voice of the Father says, "This is my beloved Son; hear him." That is the Father's word now—"Hear him." You must listen to Him. Let me ask you, Have you listened to Him? Oh, friend, you had better hear the voice of Jesus; you had better listen to what He says. You know what He said to the religious unconverted man? Perhaps you are that person. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN." The Father says to you, religious, unsaved soul, "Hear him!" Worldling, do you not hear His voice? "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark viii. 36, 37.) You had better hear Him. Are you a troubled, anxious soul? Hear what He says to the troubled soul: "Thy sins are forgiven. Thy faith has saved thee. Go in peace" (Luke vii. 48, 50).

Listen again, the Father says, "Hear him." Ah, friend, it is life to hear the voice of Jesus. To you He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live" (John v. 25). And if you hear His voice it will be life to your dead soul. "Hear, and your soul shall live," says Scripture, by the pen of Isaiah (Isa. lv. 3). Again the apostle Peter says: "Moses truly said unto

the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me: him shall ye hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people" (Acts iii. 22, 23). Jesus was that Prophet. Have you heard Him? I ask, for "Faith cometh by hearing; and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. x. 17). He rose from the dead, and now from the heavenly glory He says, "Look unto me and be ye saved;" "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And the Father says concerning Him, "Hear him!" Ah, friend, have you heard Him?

The effect of this word of the Father's was very great on these three men. I read that the "disciples fell on their face, and were sore afraid." They felt that they had missed God's mind entirely. But "Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid." Are you troubled, and trembling, and feeling anxious, because you have missed the mind of the Lord, and missed blessing by not hearing Him, and loving Him? "Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid." He is not changed. He is the same Jesus now. He filled their hearts with peace, not fear. He says to you, as to them, "Arise, and *be not afraid.*" That is what the Saviour says to a troubled soul.

"And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only." Thank God. I am very thankful that I live in a day when I have only got to do with Jesus. I have not to tremble before Moses now. I have not to fear Elijah now. I have not to think that redemption is to be got by what I

ought to be, or by turning my thoughts in upon myself. Neither law-keeping nor reformation can meet my case. The moment has arrived when God the Father says, "This is my beloved Son, hear him." I have heard the voice of Jesus. Have you heard His voice? Have you not? Ah! do you not hear it now? If you hear, you live. Thank God, you have to do with Jesus only.

There is something brought out in this scene that is analogous to what we find in the seventh of Acts. There you see that, when they were stoning Stephen, he looked up and "saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." He saw "Jesus only," and was sustained. You turn your eyes upward, and you too will see the risen Saviour in glory. What has He done between this night scene on the mount and that recorded in the seventh of Acts? He has glorified God infinitely about sin. He has gone down into death, and annulled it. He has broken the power of Satan. He has borne the sinner's sins, and put them away. He has accomplished redemption. He has been raised for the believer's justification. He has been among the dead, but He came out of death. He is risen from the dead, and He lives now on high the sinner's friend, the mighty, blessed Saviour, "Jesus only." Is it only Jesus you need, you want now? Then you may have Him just now; and if you receive Him as your Saviour you will be truly happy, and you will want everybody to know the Jesus you know. Oh! may God give you in His grace to receive Jesus simply, to believe Him, to confess Him, and to enjoy Him.

CHAPTER V.

A Night of Sorrow.

PROPITIATION.

MATT. xxvi.–xxvii.

THE eternal destiny of every soul of man hangs upon his relation to Christ. Your eternal destiny, my friend, depend upon it, hangs upon your relation to the One of whose sorrow and death these scriptures speak. It is of paramount and vital importance that you should know Him and the meaning of His suffering and death. As He passed out of this scene, the Roman centurion, and those that were with him, said, "Truly this was the Son of God." And if He be the Son of God, what should the relation of your soul and mine be to Him? Surely one of confidence—not of rejection. Nay, more, it should be one of attachment. It is a blessed thing to be attached to Jesus. It is an awful thing not to be attached to Him. Very solemn are the words of the apostle: "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema-Maranatha," *i.e.*, "cursed when He comes." Do you love Him? He loves you. I hope you will begin to love Him to-night, for He is worthy.

We have already looked together in part at the sorrowful tale of the Lord's rejection. Man did not want Him at the outset of His history here, and the close of that wondrous tale of incarnate grace reveals

the same indifference—yea, hatred towards Him. Over thirty years rolled by between the second of Matthew, and the sad scene recorded in the twenty-sixth of Matthew. For eighteen of those thirty years a veil is drawn over His life. Then He emerges and comes out into view before men. He is baptized by John the Baptist, and while praying in the middle of the river Jordan, He is suddenly owned from heaven as the Son of God. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," said the Father.

Again, as we have been contemplating, on the mount of transfiguration the heavens are opened, and the Father's voice is heard a second time, proclaiming, "This is my beloved Son," and, when poor Peter had put Moses and Elijah on an equality with Jesus, then is it that the Father emphatically adds, "Hear ye him." Moses must be silent, and Elijah must not speak. Their day has gone by; the Son of God is here to reveal what no servant could do—the love, the nature, the heart of the Father—hence the words, "Hear him." But, alas! the world had no wish for Jesus. It had no heart for Jesus.

All that can be said is that the world put up with Him for the three and a half years of His public ministry. They did not mind eating the bread created by His mighty hands in the days of hunger. They did not mind their lepers being cured, the blind receiving sight, and their dead being raised. They did not mind their need being met—their mere physical need; but inasmuch as He was the light, the truth, and the living expression of what God is in His own Person upon earth, the world, always afraid of Light and Truth which reveal moral state, got tired of Him, could not bear Him, and said, first quietly, then boldly

and openly, We must get rid of Him. A terrible tale for the Holy Ghost to tell us! A frightful charge to lie at the world's door!

Man could not bear the presence of the blessed Son of God. That is the solemn lesson which one learns in the gospels. He was rejected on earth from the outset. Matthew ii. showed us that. We find in the opening of John's Gospel that "he came to his own, and his own received him not." The Jew, to whom He first came, did not want Him, and He was rejected and slain of the Gentiles. In the chapters before us we reach the climax, and the truth of what was really in the heart of man comes out. They plotted to get rid of Him. Once or twice previously had the religious leaders of the nation tried it, but could not manage it. At length the fitting moment came.

The twenty-sixth of Matthew opens two days before the feast of the passover, or on what we should call our Wednesday. Our Lord said to His disciples, "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified." He does not say the Son of Man is *going to be* betrayed. He says *He is* betrayed. Thereafter we read: "Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people unto the palace of the High Priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill *him*." There was a confederation of the heads of the nation to put Him to death. The priests, the scribes, the elders of the people—all the heads of the nation—gathered together in solemn conclave to see if they could, by any possibility, take Him and put Him to death. "But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people." Now the very thing

they did not want God brought about, because Scripture had to be fulfilled, and at the very moment when Israel was sacrificing the pascal lamb, according to the Word of God, I repeat, at that very moment, Christ, the true Paschal Lamb, was sacrificed also. "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" is the touching way this is described by the apostle Paul (1 Cor. v. 7).

Now the way it came about is very solemn, because so frightfully descriptive of what the human heart left to itself, and hence under Satan's power, can do. Jesus is betrayed by a man who had been His companion for several years. That is what made me call this "A night of sorrow," for I can conceive of nothing more sorrowful to the Lord—nor is any page of man's history darker before God—than the circumstances taking place during the night, which Matthew here describes to us. Three men pass before you—Judas, Peter, and Jesus. They give us two warnings and an example. Judas exhibits the wickedness of the flesh, Peter shows us the weakness of the flesh, while Jesus passes before the eye as the perfect example of what man should be in a moment of deepest sorrow and trial.

Christ is therefore here the lovely pattern and example to His people. He is brought before us by the Spirit of God in this way. When the greatest pressure is brought to bear upon Him, then all the sweetness and perfection of His holy nature, and the blessed kindness of His heart, are only made the more manifest. It is when the sugar-cane is crushed that the sweetness comes out, and it is when the Lord is passing through unexampled and unparalleled sorrow that His blessed perfection and changeless grace are made more manifest than anywhere else.

A question of interest arises here, viz., Why do you find the evangelist Matthew at this point introducing into his narrative the account of the anointing of Jesus at Bethany? It is not given by Matthew in its historical place, *i.e.*, it is not in its chronological order. It had happened several days sooner, as a matter of fact (see John xii. 1-12), and its relation should have come in between the twentieth and twenty-first chapters to make it chronologically correct. Why then does Matthew bring it in here? I have no doubt it is brought in, in connection with the perfidy of Judas. It flings the baseness of Judas into most terrible relief, as you see the devoted affection that marks the woman that anointed Jesus.

The chief priests were looking for an opportunity of laying hold of Jesus. What was this occasion? The Spirit of God tells us the story of what took place four days previously. If you will read the twelfth of John's Gospel you will find that "Jesus, *six* days before the passover, came to Bethany," and there, in the house of Simon the leper, He was anointed. There it is that Mary, with a heart full of love for Him, brings her box of ointment, and breaks it over His feet, as John says. On the other hand, Matthew tells us that it was His head that was anointed.

The difference is easily explained. Matthew looks at Jesus as the Messiah, and as such He is King of the Jews, and in the light of His kingship Mary therefore anoints His head. John, however, presents Him as the Son of God, and shows Mary anointing His feet She sees Him travelling through this sandy desert, and is careful that His feet do not lack ointment. In point of fact, it was done to both His head and His feet, but each evangelist records what suits his gospel.

Mary could never forget that He had walked with her in her sorrow. Crushed by the power of death, when Lazarus fell asleep, she had known the sympathy of Jesus in the moment of her deepest sorrow, and she had also seen Him take her brother from the grave. She had learned what His grace could do, and what was His power also. He had walked with her in the moment of her sorrow, and now, in the hour of His sorrow, she is, so to say, walking with Him. The Lord greatly valued her affection, and said that wherever the gospel goes the story of that woman must also go. He will never allow it to be forgotten that when the world did not want Him one heart wanted Him above all things else. Is there a Mary here to-night? Is there a heart in this hall that wants Him above everything else? Happy indeed are you if you have put Christ before everything.

Christ was everything to Mary. That is the point in Matthew's relation of the scene, and what a contrast to this was the action of Judas. He and his fellow-disciples grumbled over the waste of the three hundred pence—£10 according to our money. Judas thought of himself, the others were full of philanthropy. It could have gone to the poor. Yes, there are a good many people who think more of philanthropy than of Christ; but Mary thought more of Christ than of philanthropy. But is not philanthropy a good thing? No doubt it is, for the Lord says, "For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good, but me ye have not always." Here was a woman whose heart was wrapped up in Him. Judas was angry, I have no doubt, at the loss of the money which, as he was a thief and bore the bag, he could have purloined.

It is easy to appreciate what led to the scene that follows. Judas and his fellow-disciples are rebuked for troubling the woman. The Lord says, "Why trouble ye the woman, for she hath wrought a good work upon me?" Any one can learn the lesson here that devotion to Christ is worth everything to Him—is better than anything else. She was devoted to Christ. "She has wrought a good work upon me: let her alone," are weighty words which we should all ponder.

Immediately after this, away goes Judas, saying to himself, "I have lost that money; I must make it up." The love of money was his ruin, and he sold his soul for gold. The thought entered the wretched man's mind clearly at this moment to sell his Master, so that he might recoup himself for the money just lost. Having made up his mind, what did he do? Evidently he walked straight into the midst of the priestly conclave gathered together at that time. Verse 3 records the conclave; verses 6 to 13 relate Mary's love; and verse 14 shows Judas visiting the priests, and making his bargain. They were considering how they could get hold of Jesus, and Judas at the moment was considering how much money he could make by giving Him up.

Is Judas' brother in this meeting to-night? Is the man whose only desire is to make money here to-night? Ah! man, God gives you a warning to-night. God has told this story of Judas to warn money-lovers. Well, Judas, the traitor, enters the company of the bloodthirsty religionists of the day. Truly was it a hellish conclave! He is a bargaining sort of a man, and he says, "What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?" They were delighted to see

him. What will you give me? How much do you think He is worth? What will you give for my Master, the Son of God? What will you give for Him? Such was the haggling that heaven heard. And the reply? "Thirty pieces of silver!" Why, the meanest and most miserable slave in the slave-market would have brought more money. That is why it says so ironically in Scripture, "A goodly price that I was prized at of them" (Zech. xi. 13). Think of it! Thirty pieces of silver! And yet for those paltry thirty pieces of silver will that poor man —now filled with the devil—really sell the Son of God, his Master, to the priests, and his own soul to the devil at the same moment.

As regards the chief priests, we read, "they were glad" when the traitor offered to sell his Lord, and covenanted to give him the money. Then follow the striking words, "And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him." Now the opportunity comes. The night before the passover was to be kept by all Israel, the Lord and His beloved disciples meet by appointment in the upper room. Very sweet and very touching are the details of what took place. He had sent two of His disciples—Peter and John—to prepare the passover; and John tells us that when they had prepared it, and had sat down, the blessed Lord washed their feet, so that they might eat it with real comfort. He loved, and loves, to put His own at perfect rest in His presence, and to this all His precious ministry of grace tends.

I pass over the touching details of that last supper. Oh! what a moment it was for the Lord, knowing, as He did, what was coming upon Him. At length He breaks the news to them that one of them would

betray Him. "And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me." The effect of His words is noticeable. One gospel says, "Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake" (John xiii. 22). Can you understand that? Oh, man, before your conscience is awakened, you look upon other people. Sinner, when you are accused of your godlessness and guilt before God, you think of other people. When you hear of men going to hell, you look for other men going there—not yourself. When you hear of the godless, you think of others, not of yourself. So was it then. "They looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake." Presently, the Holy Ghost tells us, conscience began to work, and each then says, "Lord, is it I?" Have you ever awakened to learn that, just because you are a sinner, you are a lost man? You are a guilty man, and therefore a condemned one. Possibly not yet self-condemned. Have you ever, as a sinner, asked yourself the question—Is it I? Oh, but, you say, I could not betray Christ. Well, I am perfectly sure I could, knowing my own heart. And, my dear friends, the person who is certain that he can never do it is the very person who will go and do it. Mark that! "Ah! sir," said a broken-hearted girl to me during the past week, "if anybody had told me that I could have been in this case to-day, I would not have believed it, but now I see my sin indeed." That girl received Christ as her Saviour, thank God!

Do you think Judas a bad man? Judas and you and I are cast in the same mould. We are children of the same parents. Do not be too hard on Judas. I pity him from the bottom of my heart. Poor Judas!

Where is he now? Sinner, take care lest you spend eternity with him! Look how the Lord seeks to reach his conscience, and is He not seeking to reach yours also? He says, "He it is to whom I shall give a sop when I have dipped it." Presently He gives this expression of special interest to Judas. The dipping of a piece of food into the vinegar, and giving it to a guest, was in the East an expression of very deep interest. He dips the sop, and gives it to Judas; and the latter steeled his heart against grace, and determined to go on in his wickedness, "and Satan entered into him." The last act of grace on the Saviour's part, instead of softening him, hardens his heart. And, mark you, if you do not get saved and converted, the devil will harden your heart. If you despise the grace that lingers over you, the next thing you will find is that your heart will get harder and harder.

The last thing Judas does is to despise the touch of grace. "And Satan entered into him." Awful words! Fairly in the devil's net through his own cupidity, and now hardening himself against grace, off he sets to do his deadly work, thinking—if not saying—I know where He will be found, and where He can be caught to-night. "He then, having received the sop, went immediately out; and it was night" (John xiii. 30). It was night, indeed, in every sense of the word. Then the Lord tells Peter and the other disciples what would take place. They should all deny and forsake Him. He tenderly warns Peter: "This night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." Peter replies: "If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise." Doubtless he meant it when he so spake, but self-confidence is not power in the moment of trial, and so when the trial came he fell.

Leaving the upper room, the blessed Lord with His disciples now crosses over the brook Kedron. Judas knew the place, because this was a well-known place of retirement for Jesus and His disciples. He was wont to go there. Arrived in the garden of Gethsemane, He withdraws from the main company of His disciples, taking with Him now only Peter, James, and John. These three He had taken with Him to the mount of transfiguration, and they went to sleep in the presence of His glory. Now He takes them into the garden, and they go to sleep in the presence of His sorrow. Such is man. Such is human nature. Such are you and I. We can be alike indifferent to the glory and the sorrow of Christ. They go to sleep, while the blessed Lord passes from them a little distance and prays. Have you ever pictured this scene of sorrow in the garden? Ah! what sorrow filled the Saviour's heart. Think what lay before Him. All that God or man could put into the cup of woe, He was about to drink, He foresaw. It says, "Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth" (John xviii. 4). The Lord knew at that moment everything coming upon Him, and knowing everything, He went calmly forth to meet it. How He felt everything!—the betrayal of Judas—the coming denial of Peter—the forsaking of all the disciples—the being cast out and cast off by His earthly people the Jews, misunderstood and unwanted — the failure of His earthly mission—the temptations of the enemy—the bearing of sin—the forsaking of God—wrath, judgment, and death as the end of His pathway here.

Oh, beloved friends, sorrow might well break His heart; and I do not wonder that He says, as He

goes away yonder to pray, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death" (Matt. xxvi. 38). Think of that. Or, again: "Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness" (Ps. lxix. 20).

But some one may inquire, Was propitiation effected by all this? No, my friends. Propitiation—the meeting of the righteous claims of God, the glorifying Him about sin, the making of atonement in respect thereof—was not effected by the living agonies of Jesus, neither by the sorrows He tasted, nor by the tears He shed. In the garden you have our Lord calmly, quietly pondering everything, facing everything, looking at everything, weighing everything, and that is what produced this deep sorrow in His blessed soul—but Gethsemane was not Golgotha. In Gethsemane He looked at and measured everything. In the garden He took the cup, if I might so say, and looked at its ingredients; on the cross He drank its contents. He bowed before His Father's will as He says, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." You have the perfection of Christ there, the absolute perfection of His soul as He shrinks from the cup—for having to do with sin was in it. He bows before God's will, prepared to drink it. Precious Saviour! He sees what is coming, and since it is for God's glory, He accepts it without a murmur. In that cup of which the Lord speaks, there was not lacking one single element of sorrow that either the hand of man or the hand of God could furnish. I do not doubt that Satan too, at that moment, drew near to the Lord, and put before Him what must be the consequence if He was determined to drink that cup. They had met in the wilderness before, and Satan was overcome by the

obedience of Christ, and His dependence on the Father. But Satan returns to the assault. Jesus had said, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John xiv. 30); and again, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke xxii. 53).

I do not doubt, therefore, that Satan pressed on the spirit of Jesus what must be the consequences if He was determined to go on to the end that He had in view, viz., death, as God's judgment on man, and the being forsaken by God on the cross. But, oh, blessed be His name, He did not turn from it. If you and I saw sorrow coming, we should try to avoid it. Were some great crushing blow about to fall on you to-morrow, would you not avoid it if it were possible? You would not be human if you did not. Jesus saw what was coming. He weighed it, fathomed it, measured it to the bottom, if I may so say; and then He said to His Father, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Jesus is here seen as the perfectly subject man. What a man! That man is my Saviour, thank God! Is He yours? That man has redeemed me by His obedience even unto death, and by drinking the cup. Could you but see what was in that cup, you would trust and adore Him. It was the cup of judgment, the cup of wrath, the cup of indignation, the hiding of God's face, the expression of what God must be in regard to sin. Do you not see that it was the expression of God's holy nature in respect of sin. It was the expression of the judgment of God against the sin of the first man. Christ drained that cup. Blessed be His name, on the cross He drank that cup to the very dregs; but in this night of sorrow I see the blessed Lord anticipating it all, and, as He prays, in an agony,

deprecating what He was willing to drink, "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

What that agony was we can gather from the touching words: "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong cryings and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" (Heb. v. 7). While He deprecated death, He said, I will die. Though He deprecated the cup, He said, I will drink it. He deprecated the judgment, but said, I will bear it. "Not what I will, but what thou wilt," was His resolve. The will of God must be done. He came to do it. What was the will of the Father? That He should die, "the just for the unjust." That He should give Himself to death, which had no claim on Him. Blessed be His name, He did die that He might be free to give you and me eternal life.

He looked at the cup, deprecated it, but said, I will drink it. Our eternal salvation hung upon His drinking that cup. If He did not bear that wrath and judgment, we must; and if He did not drink that cup, we must drink it. If He did not drink it for you, my hearer, you must yet drink it. Could you drain it? Sinner! you, who do not think much about the subject, if you go into judgment, and drink the cup of God's wrath, do you think you will drain it? You foolish man! Drain it? You will drink, and drink, and drink it again as the eternal ages roll on, but you will never drain it. Thank God, my Saviour has drained it for me. He has drained it to the very dregs, and has filled another cup—the cup of salvation—to the brim with love, and has put that cup to my lips, and I drink, and receive eternal life.

If you think that you will escape God's judgment of sin, apart from the cross of His Son, you have made a huge mistake. Do not be foolish, God is not mocked. God has said that sin must be judged, and hence, of necessity, propitiation must be effected ere man can be saved. This Christ alone could do. How was that propitiation effected? It was not, I repeat, by the tears of Jesus in the garden, nor by the bloody sweat of the Lord in the garden, nor by the living agonies of the Saviour—though in all these we see the intensity of the purpose of His life. Propitiation could only be, and, thank God, was effected by His death, when "by the eternal spirit he offered himself without spot to God," was made sin, sustained God's righteous judgment thereof, and poured out His soul an offering for sin even unto death. His shed blood thereafter tells of the reality of His death.

No sooner does the blessed Saviour, in the scene before us, express His determination to drink the cup, than a company led by Judas arrives. The traitor appears with an armed band. And now let us follow the Lord for a moment or two. They take Him, and bind Him fast. One gospel says, "Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest" (John xviii. 24). Annas mocks Him, and sends Him to his son-in-law, Caiaphas. There he is jeered at, mocked, spat on, and smitten with rods. They even blindfold Him, and then when He is smitten, ask, "Who is it that smote thee?" That is what man will do to Jesus, the Son of God. "He is brought like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." He makes no reply. He bears it all in patient grace. He bears all the jeering, and jibing, and mockery without resistance.

Presently Peter comes in, and three times he denies his Lord. "I know not the man," he cries with oaths. Thus one who really loved Him denies his Master.

And then what happens? "The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." Was it a withering, scornful look that said, "Miscreant! false man! you do not know me?" No, I believe the look was a tender heart-broken look, that said louder than words: "Peter, you do not know me. I know you, Peter, and I love you, and I will die for you." That look broke Peter's heart, and he "went out and wept bitterly." Christ is then taken away, first to Pilate, next to Herod, and then back to Pilate, where again he is mocked, and jeered at, crowned with thorns, and arrayed in a gorgeous robe to give the semblance of royalty.

Every insult that men could possibly heap on Him is done. Everybody sets Him at naught. What does He do? He bears it. At length the choice is made between Him and Barabbas, the murderer and the robber, the very scum of the earth, who is about to die for his own sins. Pilate asks the multitude which they will have released to them, and they cry, "Not this man, but Barabbas." Barabbas is released, and the Son of God goes, bearing the robber's cross, to Calvary to die. I have little doubt that the cross which was designed for Barabbas was laid on Jesus, and He falters under its weight as He goes to Calvary, where they crucify Him. But nothing but love is seen in Him. At length He is heard to cry out in agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It was in that darkness that the sin of man was being estimated, and Jesus by His sufferings there, was effecting propitiation, and making atonement, as He met all the claims of God in righteous-

ness and holiness. He then lays down His precious life.

There is a deep unspeakable significance in that cross. There He is made sin, and there God forsakes Him. The work of atonement is there "finished" by the suffering, dying Saviour. He dies with a cry that rends the rocks, and the veil of the temple is rent by God's own hand from top to bottom. Propitiation is effected. All God's claims in righteousness are met, and what is the result? The Holy Ghost comes down to tell you and me, that there is cleansing and salvation for the worst sinner, through the blood of this beloved One, who died on that tree.

Oh! there was never a night of sorrow like that. There was never suffering like the suffering of Jesus. How precious are the words: "Christ suffered for sins once, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Oh, may the Holy Ghost lead you to rest your poor guilty soul on that precious Saviour. You may know Him as your own from this moment forth. Will you not praise Him? Shall not your heart be all for Him in future?

I judge the centurion's heart was reached, as he said, "Truly this is the Son of God"; and I have no doubt that man was converted from what he heard. God grant that you may be converted from what you have heard to-night, for mark you, if you are not converted, you will have to be judged by Jesus. Make up your mind. You had better make it up. God help you to be decided for Christ from this moment forth.

CHAPTER VI.

A Night in Darkness.

REGENERATION.

John ii. 23, 25, iii. 1-21.

WE have been glancing hitherto at the night scenes which are specially relative to the history of the Lord Jesus while here upon earth. In the treatment which He received at the hands of man we get the development of the real state of man's heart, and the absolute demonstration of the perfect moral ruin, by sin, of the first man. Completely away from God, and under the power of Satan, he is seen manifestly as an utterly lost sinner, needing redemption and new birth.

In the night scenes that will now pass before us we shall see either in type and shadow, or in plain doctrinal statement, how the sovereign grace of God comes in to meet the state we have described. And first of all we will ponder over the striking scene before us, in the verses I have read, where the truth of new birth by the Spirit of God is developed, for regeneration is the only antidote to man's ruin.

Every man who has been born into this world must be newborn, if he is to see or know the kingdom of God. For observe, the man who is only born once

dies twice, but the man who is born twice will certainly not die twice, and, thank God, he need not even die once.

It is very important to get hold of this truth in its simplicity, that man as man needs to be born again. There is an idea abroad to-day that because Jesus was a man, therefore somehow or other, in some peculiar unknown way, humanity has been raised, and that man as man—I mean sinful man—has been raised into nearness to God. Such a thought, I have no manner of hesitation in boldly affirming, is utterly false, and has no foundation whatever in Scripture. The incarnation of the Lord Jesus does not bring you and me, beloved friends, to God. It only proves how far away from God we were. And therefore I am prepared for the language in which the Lord declares to this interesting religious ruler that he "must be born again."

The history of this man who came to Jesus by night is very charming, because we see in it what I call progress in a man's soul. We do not all get into the light in a moment, by a jump as it were; as a rule we get on slowly. True, this was the beginning with Nicodemus, for wherever the Holy Ghost mentions Nicodemus, He records the fact that he came to Jesus by night. John iii. tells us of his so coming; the seventh chapter refers to him as "he that came to Jesus by night"; and the nineteenth chapter speaks of him as "Nicodemus, which *at the first* came to Jesus by night." And what did he do *at the last?* He came out boldly for Christ in broad daylight. I wonder whether you have done that or not? I wonder whether you have even taken the first step of coming to Christ secretly? If not, I urge you to take that step to-night.

You tell me rather disparagingly he came by night. Well, never mind, he came to Jesus, and that is more than you have done yet. There are three stages in his history. I call John iii. midnight, chap. vii. twilight, and chap. xix. daylight. It was darkest midnight in that man's soul when he came stealthily creeping to Jesus, hoping that nobody saw him; he was beginning to get a glimmer of light when he put a word in sideways for the Lord in chap. vii.; but the death of Christ produced in Nicodemus what His life had never effected. When he saw that He was dead, he got the clear revelation of the truth of John iii., and his actions said in the face of the whole world, Think what you like, say what you like, do what you like, Christ is for me, and I am for Him: I identify myself with the Man you have cast out and crucified. He is on the side of Jesus boldly. God grant you may be there from this night forth, if never before.

But it is important to see, and that is the great point in this man's history, that man must have an entirely new nature in order to have to say to God at all. You will have to get an altogether different nature from that which you got from your mother as a child of Adam. Neither you nor I have a single thing in us, or about us, that will fit us for the presence of God. A good many years have rolled by between the second chapter of Luke's Gospel, which we have already pondered, and the second chapter of John. What has taken place? The blessed Saviour has passed through infancy, childhood, youth, manhood. He has come out after years of perfection in private life in Nazareth, and having been baptized of John in Jordan, the heavens are opened, and a voice is heard declaring, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I

am well pleased." And, forsooth, you doubt that He is the Son of God! I pity your folly, and your unbelief; you are blindly shutting your eyes to the most lovely object that God could put before those eyes, whether upon earth or in heaven. You are closing your eyes to God's beloved Son, and your ears to the heavenly testimony of God, when Jesus, having been baptized, and emerging from the water, is greeted with the salutation, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

We have already seen that on the Mount of Transfiguration, when Peter would have put Jesus on a level with Moses and Elias, and said, "Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias" (Luke ix. 33), the Father's voice is again heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son: hear him." He did not say "hear him" at the baptism of Jesus by John; He took it for granted, so to speak, that when He was proclaimed Son of God, everybody would listen to Him; but when Peter would put the Saviour on the same level with the Lawgiver and the Reformer, the Father instantly steps in and sweeps Moses and Elias off the scene. Do not forget this. Moses is gone, for the law could not save you: Elijah's day is gone by, for reformation could not meet your case: and we are in the day of the Son of God, the day of the revelation of the Saviour, and the Father's voice says, "Hear *him*."

And did people hear Him, and did they believe on Him? Well, the end of John ii. tells us that many believed on His name, when they saw the miracles which He did. But what follows? "Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men,

and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man." Do you think there is any saving virtue in the faith that believes in miracles? Plenty of people nowadays try hard to get what they call evidences of Christianity. If you could fill this hall with what are called external evidences, I would not give a "thank you" for them. Why? Because they would not produce in my soul or yours or any man's, living faith in the Person of the Son of God. If I cannot trust Jesus for what He is, and for what God tells me about Him, I shall never trust Him because of the external evidences that people are so desirous of having. Do I not believe in miracles? Yes, I delight in the miracles of the Lord Jesus. But do those miracles lead the heart to trust Him? Not a bit. I trust Him because of the revelation God has given to my soul of what He is. And observe, the faith that is produced only by miracles seen by the natural eye,—that faith, the Lord says, I do not trust.

There is a great lesson, I think, for every person who hears me, and for every one throughout Christendom, in those words of the Lord Jesus in the last verses of John ii. He as it were says, You believe in Me when you see My miracles: you do not trust Me for what I am, but because of My power to do: then, says the Lord, I do not trust you. He knew what was in man; He knew that man had got a nature which was irretrievably ruined,—a nature in which there was evil that could not be eradicated,—a nature which was of no value at all before God, and that there must be brought in something entirely new. And therefore in this third chapter of John the Lord passes on to tell of the way in which the soul gets this new nature, to tell of the

new birth which all must pass through if they will see God's kingdom. It is of vast importance for the soul to see this, God cannot trust me. The voice of Jesus in John ii. says, I cannot trust you; and the same voice in John iii. says, You will have to trust Me. Can you say, "Ah, blessed Lord, I can trust Thee, and if I had a thousand souls I would trust Thee with them all"? Who would not trust in Him, the Son of the living God?

I said this morning to a young man, who had a doubt about Jesus being the Son of God: "How could you be the image of your father if you were not your father's son? And how could Jesus be the revelation of God, the image of God, if He were not God's own beloved Son?" And just let me say this in passing: if the Lord Jesus Christ be not God's Son, He is not worthy of the credence or the confidence of a single heart in this hall. And why? Because He said He was the Son of God, and if He were not, He has been guilty of falsehood, and therefore He was not a good man. Did He not say to the man whose eyes He had opened in John ix., "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" And did He not also tell him, "Thou hast both seen him, and he it is who talketh with thee"? The dear simple fellow fell down and said, "Lord, I believe, and he worshipped him." You cannot do better, my friend, than follow his example; and if you have any doubts about the divinity of the Lord Jesus, may God dispel those unworthy doubts, and lead you to listen to the language and testimony of the Son who only knows the Father's heart, and nature, and who came from heaven to earth to reveal the Father's love, to make known the nature of Him, whose eternal Son He was, but who became also in

time a man in lowly grace to meet the need of man, and that by His own death.

But first of all in this night scene Jesus brings out the solemn truth that man needs to be born again, and the way it comes out is very interesting. There is a little word connecting the second and third chapters of John's Gospel which does not appear in our ordinary English Bible. It says in the end of chap. ii. that "Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man"; and then the third chapter really begins with, "*But* there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus," &c. The Spirit of God, so to speak, says, I will bring before you the very nicest piece of humanity that the world can produce, a man who would be supposed to have claims to anything and everything, on the ground of his moral character, and religious activity. The very best specimen of a man that the earth can produce, as the expression of religiousness in the nature of man, comes now to the Saviour, and becomes the means of bringing out the truth on this subject.

"Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews . . . came to Jesus by night;" and you may ask, What brought him? I have no doubt whatever that he was brought by the distinct sense in his own soul, that whatever he was, and whatever he possessed, he could not meet the claims of God; he desired to have something better than he had. He is a picture of thousands and tens of thousands of religious people to-day. Although they have a great amount of religion they are not satisfied, the heart is not happy, the conscience is not purged, they are not at rest: they would like to have

something they do not possess, but they have not yet come boldly to Jesus. Well, Nicodemus came to Jesus, and he came by night. The reason why he came by night is, I think, pretty plain. He hoped nobody would see him, he did not wish anybody to know about it. And that is what generally takes place when a man—above all, a religious man—really comes to Jesus, and is born of God, in the end of his days. It is an immense mercy, surely, but still he does not like to let everybody think that he has been wrong all the bygone days of his history.

Now look here, my friend, if you have never yet been born of the Spirit of God, let nothing hinder you from coming now to Jesus. Let me urge you by all the joys of heaven, and by all the certainties of eternal damnation, if you die in your sins, to turn now to the Lord in uprightness and truth; for remember, "he that doeth truth cometh to the light." Nicodemus really came to the light though he came by a tunnel. He said to himself, I will get to the One who will give me light, but I will take care to let nobody know about it, for the very fact would be a tacit confession that I am not right. Well, beloved friends, it is infinitely better to find out and to own you are wrong, than to go on wrong without knowing it. I said to that young man to-day, "If I am wrong in my faith I will for ever thank the man who will put me right." Do you not want to be put right? Do you not want the truth? Do you not want to know the Son of God, if as yet you know Him not? Surely!

Let me ask you, friend, Have you come to Jesus even as Nicodemus did? Perhaps not yet. Well, would not this very night be a good time to come to Him? Could you ever have a better time for coming

to the Lord? At this very moment, where you sit, let your heart turn round to the blessed precious Saviour, who died and rose again, and if you have never gone through in your soul's history what is described here, let it be this night. Unsaved man, unconverted man, unwashed, unpardoned man, it is high time you came to Jesus.

I trust some here are like Nicodemus, troubled, anxious, burdened. He had not got the truth, he felt that, and he came to Jesus to get it. He came like a scholar going to school. He believed that Jesus was a teacher come from God. He was of that class, of whom I spoke, who are convinced of things by their eyes, but that is not faith.

The Lord at once sees where he is: the darkness is no hindrance to Him. He reads your very heart. He knows the secrets of your inmost soul. He knows your deep need. He knows that you have eternity before you, and that you have the sins of a whole life-time upon your guilty soul, if unsaved to this hour. He will tell you the truth, whether it be palatable or not. It was exceedingly unpalatable to Nicodemus I think I see the look of amazement on his face, as the Lord answered his first inquiry that night. He, so to speak, takes the place of a pupil, and recognises the Lord as a divine teacher. He implies by his words, I believe you are a divine teacher, and I am quite willing to be a scholar, though I should not like anybody to know it. But the Lord immediately answers, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." I am persuaded the astonishment of Nicodemus was great to be told that he was not fit to enter the kingdom of God, and did not possess the capacity to

understand divine things. But he did not, nor do you, nor I, save as the fruit of God's own sovereign grace working in our souls. Go to a man born blind, and describe to him the beauties of some lovely landscape in the country. Does he understand you? No, he is absolutely by his very condition unable to comprehend what you have been describing. He has never seen a mountain, or a river, or a wood; he can form no idea of a landscape. You may endeavour as much as you like to picture it to him, but he has not any adequate power to understand what is perfectly familiar to you. Man's sin has carried him into distance from God, and he has now a nature that cannot apprehend divine things. "There is none that understandeth" (Rom. iii. 11).

This is Nicodemus's first lesson, and at once he says: "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" Most foolish, you might say, but the Lord does not rebuke him. He only makes it the occasion of patiently opening out the truth: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." What this meant Nicodemus did not understand. What it means, many, alas! nowadays do not understand. There are many who think it means baptism. I am persuaded it means nothing of the kind. A man might be baptized, and live the life of a Christian professor, and at the end pass into hell for ever.

Oh, but you say, there is the Spirit. Yes, if there be the work of the Holy Ghost, all well and good. But what is this being "born of water and of the Spirit"? There can be no manner of doubt as to the

meaning of the Lord's words. Water is the figure used frequently in Scripture for God's Word. Do you not recollect in Ezekiel xxxvi., to which the Lord alludes here, it is prophesied that when Israel is restored by-and-by, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you" (ver. 25). Isaiah uses water likewise as a figure of the Word. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed" (Isa. xliv. 3).

Coming now to the pages of the New Testament, I find the Lord in John xiii. washing the disciples' feet, and then in chap. xv. we find Him saying to them, "Now ye are clean." How? Through the water? No, but "through *the word* which I have spoken unto you" (ver. 3). In Ephesians v. I read that "Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (vers. 25, 26). The apostle James says, "Of his own will begat he us *with the word of truth*, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures" (i. 18); and again St Peter says, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by the word of God*, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. i. 23). It is the Word of God, in the living power of the Holy Ghost, that is ever and only the means of the new birth.

Now what the Lord presses upon Nicodemus here is that the new birth is an indispensable necessity for every soul of man ere he can see or enter into the kingdom of God, whether you look at it on its earthly side for the Jew, or its heavenly side for the Christian now. You say, But I have been baptized. Neverthe

less you will go to the lake of fire, unless you are born again—"born of water, and of the Spirit," as the Lord puts it here. Baptism is not new birth. I value baptism greatly; it is an integral part of the faith of my soul; but it will not convey to you or to me a new and vital principle of existence before God, and that is what we need. You and I need a new life and nature to put us in a state in which we can know and enjoy God.

It is the Word of God used by the Spirit of God that is the means of the new birth. I do not exclude faith; no doubt faith has its place. There is faith in the soul with regard to the Word; but you will find that souls are always born by the Word of God. The Lord adds immediately, as the proof of this necessity, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Educate it, it is but educated flesh; make it religious, it is religious flesh; improve it, reform it, it is still flesh. Another has well said, "You may sublimate the flesh as you like, you will never distil spirit out of it." Why? Because "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." It partakes of the nature of its source.

From the Lord's words which immediately follow, we can gather the perfect consternation that must have filled the heart of this Jewish ruler. "*Marvel not* that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." Let me press on you, with the greatest earnestness, that the Lord Jesus Christ says to you, and to me, as well as to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again." That is what I call an inexorable "must"—viz., the necessity of man's nature as a ruined sinner before God, and the question raised by God for you is this—Have *you* been born again? There is another "*must*," which we shall look at presently.

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." This brings in a new life and nature altogether. You and I have been born according to the laws of natural generation; we are children of Adam; but we have in us the flesh. Will it ever do for God? It will not. We have a nature with all the faculties and capabilities necessary for man's existence here on earth, but that does not fit us for relationship with God, because it is corrupted by the flesh. Hence man must have a new nature altogether; he must be born of water, and of the Spirit.

"The wind bloweth where it listeth." God is sovereign, but He always uses the Word, and He can use a very feeble instrument to bring His Word to a soul. He may even use a dumb creature as an instrument of His grace, as in a case of which I know. You may think it a strange thing if I say that a cow was the means of a man's conversion. An infidel was out walking one Sunday evening—and you know Sunday is always rather a dismal day for a man who is not a Christian—and was wishing the day was over. He went into his park, on the other side of which grazed his cow. The cow came across the park when she saw her master, to whom she was attached, and licked his hand, which was on the railing. He suddenly recollected a scripture which he had learned when a child: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider" (Isa. i. 3). (Parents, teach your children the Scriptures.) As this scripture flashed upon his mind, the poor infidel exclaimed, "Upon my word, after all the Word of God is true; that beast knows me, and

I do not know God." And he was converted, thank God! Conversion is always by God's Word, and He uses that Word as the means of blessing to souls, perhaps years and years after the Word has been heard.

More than a century ago there was a boy listening to a preacher in a church in the town of Dartmouth, about four miles distant from the spot where I was born in Devonshire. That boy became a man, and lived to a great age. He lived to be a hundred years old in the backwoods of America. One day, when he was still able to do a little work in the woods, he sat down, and began thinking. "This is my birthday," he said to himself; "to-day I am a hundred years old;" and he turned back upon his past life. Back and back he went till he remembered when, as a boy of about seventeen, he sat in Dartmouth parish church and heard John Fletcher preach from this text: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema-Maranatha"—cursed when He comes (1 Cor. xvi. 22). The preaching and the text came up in his mind after eighty-three years, and the old man said to himself, "I do not love the Lord Jesus Christ; I shall be lost." He was a convicted sinner, and soon believed in the Lord, and was saved. That scripture, heard eighty-three years before, was the means of his conversion. Thank God!

Ah! my friend, God's Word is quick and powerful, and He often sends strange parts of it to awaken a man, for "the wind bloweth where it listeth." What do you suppose was the scripture used of God to my conversion? It was this: "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble" (Jas. ii. 19). That scripture was quoted to me thirty-five years ago, and I saw the truth, that I

had no more real faith than a damned devil in hell. I am not ashamed to say that I saw my company, and fled. I was awakened, and said to myself, "I had better turn to God at once;" and I did, praised be His name. Oh! beloved friends, give heed to the Word of God, and if you have never yet turned to God, will you not turn to Him just now?

Nicodemus is now thoroughly aroused by what the Lord had said to him, and he exclaims, "How can these things be?" The Lord tells him that, as a teacher in Israel, he ought to have known what Ezekiel says in chap. xxxvi., which we have already considered. And He adds: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness." Man does not care to believe God. You will frequently find people saying, "I cannot believe." You cannot believe whom? Pick up a newspaper, and read of some horrible crime, or accident, and you believe it every word. Take up Bradshaw, to consult his time-tables for a journey, and you trust him implicitly. But you take up God's Word which tells you that you are a lost sinner, and that God in love gave His Son for you, and you say, "I cannot believe it." Yours is a downright bad case. You cannot believe the God of truth! You can believe a man like yourself, but God, the living God, you say you cannot believe. What an insight this gives us of man's heart! The Lord says, "We speak that we do know." He knew God's requirements, and He knew man's necessities, but yet man did not believe.

Having spoken of earthly things, the Lord passes on to tell of heavenly things. He alone was qualified to speak of them. "No man hath ascended up to

heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven." He alone knew what suits heaven, what God requires, and what God desires; and He came down from that scene of heavenly light to make all this known, and not only to make known God's requirements, but also to meet the need of man. How He meets that need He now unfolds. He was on earth, He had come down from heaven, and He was going up to heaven again; but, wondrous truth, He was in heaven at the very moment when He spoke to Nicodemus. He says, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven." Only the Son of Man, who, as to His divine nature, was in heaven, could bear witness to what suited it, as having come from thence. To quote the words of another: "We have a revelation of heavenly things brought directly from heaven by Christ, and in His Person. He revealed them in all their freshness—a freshness which was found in Him, and which He, who was ever in heaven, enjoyed; He revealed them in the perfection of the Person of Him who made the glory of heaven, whose nature is the atmosphere which all those who are found there breathe, and by which they live; He, the object of the affections which animate this holy place from the Father Himself down to the last of the angels who fill heaven's courts with their praises, He is the centre of all glory. Such is the Son of Man, He who came down to reveal the Father—truth and grace—but who divinely remained in heaven in the essence of His divine nature, in His Person inseparable from the humanity with which He was clothed! The deity which filled this humanity was inseparable in His Person from all the divine per-

fection, but He never ceased to be a man, really and truly a Man before God."*

As He passes on to tell of the heavenly things, He again replies to Nicodemus's query, "How can a man be born again?" Jesus tells him, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life"—*i.e.*, you must be born again, and I must die. Alone upon the ground of My death, and My passing under God's judgment, can you be brought to God. You want life, Nicodemus, but for you to get life I must take death. Observe the "as" and the "so" in that fourteenth verse. You know the story of the brazen serpent. Israel was bitten by the fiery serpents, and the people were perishing. The serpent on the pole was the figure of the creature that did all the mischief. What has wrought the mischief in regard to man? Sin. And what is the fruit of sin? Death. And the Lord, in applying this figure to Himself, unfolds to us the truth that He must die, and pass under judgment. His incarnation alone cannot bring blessing to lost sinners, though it is very blessed to look at it in itself. I must have His death. I can only feed upon Christ as the One who has died and risen again.

No doubt the Lord read the thoughts of Nicodemus's heart at that moment. Nicodemus might think, But where is the man who could die for me, and bear my judgment? The Lord answers that immediately: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should

* "Notes on the Gospel of John," by J. N. D., p. 37. (Morrish, London.)

not perish, but have everlasting life." Look at what we have here: the Son of Man in verse 14, and the Son of God in verse 16. God has emptied His heart, if I may say so, in giving His own beloved Son. His interest in man was so great, His love for man was so deep, that nothing less could express it. Satan in the Garden of Eden had told man, God is not good enough to give you the fruit of that tree; and what is God's answer here? My love to you is so great and deep that I will give My only Son, My well-beloved for you, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

How simple and how full that sixteenth verse is! It has two sides: God's side, and man's side—God loving, and giving; we believing, and having. How simple God's way of salvation is, and how precious the Person in whom it is all wrapped up! It has been well said that Christianity is not a set of dry dogmas, to which you have to give your assent, but divine truth wrapped up in the Person of a living man. The glories of His Person none can fully unfold, they are simply unfathomable and inexpressible, but I love to sing—

"How wondrous the glories that meet
In Jesus, and from His face shine.
His love is eternal and sweet;
'Tis human, 'tis also divine!
His glory—not only God's Son—
In manhood He had His full part—
And the union of both joined in one
Forms the fountain of love in His heart."

It was love, divine, precious, unspeakable love that led Him to die for us on that accursed tree, and, if you believe on Him, you have eternal life through His death. I say receive it, believe it. You may

tell me you cannot understand it. No, but what I cannot understand I can believe, what I cannot fathom I can swim in, what I cannot comprehend I can enjoy. I know that God's Son has died for me, and I know that the source of all blessing is in His perfect love. It was a lunatic, it is said, who wrote these words :—

"Could I with ink the ocean fill,
Were every blade of grass a quill,
Were the whole heaven of parchment made,
And every man a scribe by trade ;
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry,
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky."

Think of being loved by God after such a sort, and yet not believing it. Believe it now, my friend, and you will have everlasting life. But you tell me, I do not know for whom this everlasting life is. The answer is here: it is for "whosoever believeth in him." Believing in Jesus, you shall not perish, but have everlasting life. You will be brought into everlasting blessing, in association with the Son of God. What you have to do is to trust Him, bow down your heart to Him, and then confess Him. That is the way of salvation. For it is added, "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world ; but that the world through him might be saved."

Nicodemus went away that night, and thought a good deal, I have no doubt, and after a while the Jews began to plot to take away the Lord's life, and then Nicodemus began to think, It is time for me to come to the front a little, and show which side I am on.

The moment he does speak a little word, indirectly, on behalf of Jesus, how is he met? With scorn and derision. "Art thou also of Galilee?" say the Pharisees; "search and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" (John vii. 52). The speakers begin to think he is almost a pervert or convert. Ah, my friend, do not you be turned aside by the laughter of some person who knows less than yourself: do not let the sneer or the jeer of a worldling turn you aside from coming boldly out for the Saviour.

Now that the truth is out, and the world has shown what it thinks of Jesus, do as Nicodemus did in chap. xix. In chap. iii. it was midnight darkness in his soul; in chap. vii. twilight marks his state; but in chap. xix. it is what I call daylight in his soul. The Son of Man was lifted up, and Nicodemus then understood the meaning of John iii. 14, and therefore he comes forward boldly, with his hundred pounds of spices, and he says to the whole world: I believe in Him, the Son of God, and Son of Man; I accept Him, I trust in Him; He has died, and died for me, and I am His from this hour forth. Will *you* say that from this hour? Then you will be able to sing that hymn—

"The gospel of Thy grace
My stubborn heart has won;
For God so loved the world,
He gave His only Son,
That 'whosoever will believe,
Shall everlasting life receive.'"

CHAPTER VII.

A NIGHT IN EGYPT.

REDEMPTION.

EXOD. xii.

WE have already looked at the wonderful truth of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and that He is the One of whom this twelfth of Exodus speaks, in type, there can be no manner of doubt whatever. You will remember that when John the Baptist saw Jesus coming to him, he emphatically said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29).

Again, we have seen the necessity of the new birth taking place in man—that he is in a condition which requires an absolutely new work *in him.* Now we will look a little at the testimony of Scripture as to the work done *for him.* There is an immense difference between the work done for me, and the work done in me. The work of the Holy Ghost *in* a man is going on all through his history here; it is a progressive work, and in that sense it is never complete; but the work done *for* us, the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, *is* complete. The words of the dying Saviour on the cross were, "It is finished." And, oh, it is an immense thing for the soul to get hold of what

those words convey. If you have never, to your knowledge, had a legacy left to you, never say so again, for there has been indeed a legacy left to you by the Lord Jesus Christ—a finished work, which, if you only receive and rest on, will do two things for you ; it will deliver you out of the grip of the devil, and it will bring you to God.

There are two sides to the foundation truth of redemption, which is our subject this evening, though I can only touch on one side at present. It has the Godward side, and it has the side that relates to the power of the enemy, who oppresses me as a sinner. Israel in Egypt was in a very sorry case. The people were under a terrible oppressor. They were just like us sinners, in the hands of the enemy, ground down by oppression. Their lives were embittered by cruel bondage, and they were in misery. Well, just like exercised souls, they wanted to escape from their bondage, and the power of the enemy was of course put forth to hinder them. This is where redemption comes in ; and redemption is this, that the shackles, the fetters, and the chains that bound the captive must all be broken to pieces in order that the captive may be set free. "Redemption" is a beautiful word. It implies not only that we are brought out of the power of the enemy, but that we are brought to God.

But observe, I cannot be brought from under the power of the enemy till the claims of God, in righteousness, have been first perfectly met, and satisfied. I am a sinner, you are a sinner, man is a sinner, and therefore the condition which has come in between God and man, as the result of sin, must first be met. The result of sin is death, and the only way for you and me to be delivered from our sins and their con-

sequences is by a redemption that is connected with death. I can only be brought out of death by death. There is but one doorway to God, and that is death typified in Exodus xii. by the death of the lamb.

Now the difference between Exodus xii. and Exodus xiv. (which will come before us at another time) is this, that in the former I am set right with God, in the latter I am delivered from Pharaoh, the enemy. What puts you right with God? The blood. And what will put you right with the enemy? God. In Exodus xii. the people had the blood between them and God; in chap. xiv. they had God between them and the foe; and that is deliverance. There is no soul really delivered unless he knows distinctly what Exodus xiv. teaches in figure—the salvation of God—typified in the Red Sea. The death of the paschal lamb is that aspect of the cross of Christ which meets our need, as screening us from God, while that death also brings us to God; the Red Sea is, in type, the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ for us, by which we are brought entirely out of the grip, and the reach of the enemy; nay, more, in which we see the power of the enemy absolutely broken, so that what is rightly called "The salvation of the Lord" is there seen.

I may just say in passing, that, if you are at all careful to study Scripture, it will interest you to see that there are four great truths in Exodus xii., xiii., xiv., and xv. I am not, however, going to build doctrines upon the types of these chapters. We have the doctrines in the New Testament, but the types of the Old Testament are exceedingly valuable, as forming a sort of picture-book of Christ, and we have in these four chapters most precious pictures of four

fundamental and unspeakably blessed truths presented in the gospel.

In chap. xii. we have SHELTER through the blood; in chap. xiii. SANCTIFICATION by the blood; in chap. xiv. SALVATION; and in chap. xv. SATISFACTION. The blood which has sheltered me from the righteous judgment of God is the very thing that sets me apart to God. Therefore in chap. xiii. God claims the first-born as His own, on the ground of redemption. I frankly confess that I believe I have treated this thirteenth chapter with very scant courtesy, in the course of my thirty-five years' preaching, and I am sure it is too generally overlooked. I would now say to all preachers, Do not skip from the twelfth chapter of Exodus to the fourteenth, let the thirteenth have its own place. There is nothing more important. From the moment I am sheltered from the righteous judgment of God, by the blood of the lamb, I belong to God, I am set apart to Him. "It is mine," God says, of the sheltered soul (chap. xiii. 2). When we come to chap. xiv. we have salvation, and in chap. xv. satisfaction. Thus in chap. xii. I am sheltered *from* God by the blood; in chap. xiii. I am set apart *to* God by the blood; in chap. xiv. I am saved *by* God from my foes; and in chap. xv. I am satisfied *with* God—there the people SING. Indeed, redemption is a wonderful word. Shelter, sanctification, salvation, and satisfaction, are all wrapped up in God's redemption, and pictured to us in these four chapters.

Now let us look a little more closely at this twelfth chapter. It is important to take in first of all what Israel's position was. They were a set of slaves—so were we; they were in bondage to a hard taskmaster —so were you and I by nature. Satan, the god and

prince of this world, holds every unredeemed, unconverted, sinner, firmly in his grasp. If we turn back for a moment to Exodus i., we there read: "The Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour; and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field; all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour" (vers. 13, 14). Yes, they were in a sad case. Slaves in Egypt (type of the world), and under the power of this heartless king, held in bondage of the bitterest kind, little wonder that their souls became distressed—they were miserable. Are they not like sinners in this world? Why, unsaved man, you are often as miserable as you can be. You cannot face death calmly, and you are afraid of the truth that after death comes judgment, for sin has produced a breach between the soul and God, and He must judge sin, sooner or later. And now, if you think of turning to God in your misery, Satan will do his best to hinder you. God notices the misery of His people, and in chap. iii. He announces to Moses His determination to come down and deliver them: "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them" (vers. 7, 8). This is Luke ii. anticipated. The Lord was come down—what for? To deliver. What did Jesus come down for? To save. You could not save yourself, I could not save myself, so the Lord Himself comes down to save. Here is His purpose; not only "to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians," but "to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with

milk and honey." Redemption carries with it the thought not only bringing out, but bringing in. God would bring you out of the world, from under the bondage and slavery of sin, and to Himself through the redemptory work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is God's purpose.

Of course the moment this purpose of God is propounded, the hatred and opposition of the enemy are aroused. God sends a message to Pharaoh: "Let my people go" (Exod. v. 1). Pharaoh answers: "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?" He is like many sinners nowadays. When even the gospel comes to them they will not submit; they refuse to obey. I recommend you to obey His voice; you will find it a terrible thing, by-and-by, if you do not. Remember, too, that it is sovereign grace and goodness on the part of God to appear for our deliverance. Only think of the interest that God has in us! Why did He not leave us alone? Why did He not let us perish in our sins? Why did He send His Son? Ah, He knew our state, He pitied our misery, He yearned over us, and therefore He sent His beloved Son, in order to accomplish a work that could redeem us.

Well, as I have said, the moment Pharaoh hears that it was in God's mind to deliver this miserable company of brick-making slaves from under his power, his opposition is aroused. I will not let them go, he says. Am I going to let my servants go? Not I. And do you think the devil is going to help to set his slaves free, who now hear me? Not if he can hinder it. He will do his very best to hinder; he always does. His first move is to make the world a happy place, to make people satisfied with themselves, to

make them think they are not lost at all, that they are not in bondage, that they are getting on very well in the world. If only he can get you to go on unawakened, and unaroused, his object is gained. And when the gospel for sinners, for the ungodly, for the lost, rings in your ears, Satan will make you a most generous man. Ah! yes, you say, that is a very good gospel for the man behind me, and just suits the man beside me, but, as for myself, of course a decent, respectable man, as I am, does not need it. There is no place where people are so generous as in a gospel meeting; they will give this piece to this person, and the next to another, and let this man, or that man, any one but themselves, have the blessing; they come and they go away unsaved, for the god of this world blinds their eyes.

Remember that the very fact of God having sent a Saviour is a proof that you and I are lost. But people will not have this; they do not like to hear it. If a preacher talks of judgment to come, or of sinners going to hell, they will not listen to it. "Surely we are all facing for heaven," people say. No, no. Do not deceive yourself. If you are not redeemed, if you are not under the shelter of the blood of Christ, God's Lamb, your face is not heavenward, but toward the lake of fire. You will have to meet the judgment of God yourself, unless you get under the shelter of the blood of Him who bore that judgment as your substitute.

Pharaoh seeks to hinder the Israelites from getting out of bondage; he will not let them go; so, from chap. v. to the end of chap. xi., you have the long and wonderful account of how God waits in patience while seeking to break down the opposition of the enemy,

and at the same time discovering whether the Israelites really wanted deliverance.

I do not dwell on these chapters, full of deep interest as they are, if carefully studied, but pass on to chap. xii., where God brings out the truth of redemption. Nine plagues have rolled over Egypt, and now the moment has come for God to bring out the great foundation truth, running all through Scripture, that the only basis of relationship between man and God, since man has fallen, is founded on death; relationship with Him must be established by blood. I know that nowadays people do not like to hear of the blood; I know that the blood of Christ is trampled under foot; but, thank God, I assure you there is a way, and only one way, in which you and I, as sinners, can meet God, in righteousness, and that is the blood-stained pathway of the cross. The new and living way to God is through the death of Christ, not His birth. His birth was necessary, of course, for, if He had not been born, He could not have died; He became a man in order to die.

The difference between the death of Christ and the death of one of us is vital. You and I die because we are sinful men, whereas Christ became a man in order that He might die. You and I had to die; He had not. On Him death had no claim whatever. He could say, 'The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John xiv. 30). There was no seed of death in Christ. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners. It was not only that the Father could say, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" but His very foes had to confess His excellence and spotlessness. "Never man spake like this man," said the officers who had been sent to

take Him; Herod found nothing worthy of death in Him; Pilate was obliged to declare, "I find no fault in him"; the dying thief said to his neighbour, "This man hath done nothing amiss." What did he mean by that? He says, as it were, You and I never did a right thing, and here is One who never did a wrong one, and yet He is dying for me, and I am going to cling to Him. And so he turns to the Lord, and says, "Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom." Oh! my friends, get hold of this; you and I were sinners under sentence of death, but, in grace, the Lord Jesus Christ has stepped in, and died in the room and stead of those who were guilty and lost.

But if God is to bring His people out of Egypt, He must do so righteously; His own character must be vindicated. And therefore the death of Christ must, in figure, be brought before us. The sentence of God upon man for sin is death; that is sin's wages; but, if a man die for himself, how can he redeem himself? That is the difficulty. Psalm xlix. declares that "none can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." Therefore we are shut up to the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, redemption through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, God's own Son, who has died, and "once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Pet. iii. 18).

The moment has come, in Exodus xii., when God is is going to redeem His people; but, I emphasise, that redemption has two sides. Redemption by *blood* meets the claims of God's nature, whereas redemption by *power* meets the necessity of the people's condition, as under Pharaoh's (for us Satan's) power. Observe too that God marks out redemption as the

commencement of an entirely new history for His people: "This month shall be to you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you" (ver. 2).

May I now ask you, Are you saved yet? Have you begun to live unto God? You have not, unless you have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. I saw an old man the other day, every hair of whose head was snow white, and his face wrinkled and furrowed with age, and I asked him, "How old are you?" The old man answered, with a smile, "Just four years old." I knew what he meant. For eighty years he had been in the service of the devil, and on the road to hell, but four years before God had opened his eyes and his ears to the beauty and sweetness of the gospel; he had fled to Jesus, and Jesus had saved him. It was the commencement of a new history for him, and he could therefore say truly that his age was just four years.

How old are you, my friend? Well, I daresay many could tell the year, the month, the day, perhaps the very hour of their conversion. I could give you, I might almost say, the very tick of the clock when I was converted, thirty-five years ago. But the point is, Have you got under the shelter of the blood of the Lamb? Have you begun this new history? Can you from the bottom of your soul, with an honest and true heart, say, "Lord, I have got under the shelter of the blood of the atoning Lamb; I have begun to live to God"? If you have never yet done so, let me urge you to begin now. I do not know a better time to begin your soul's history with God than this very moment.

Let us now look at God's instructions to Moses

regarding the lamb. "Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb . . . your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year . . . and ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month; and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening" (vers. 3-6). This is a type, no doubt, of the life of Christ on earth. Had there been a blemish in Him, it would have come out. But, thank God, there was none. It speaks of Him who knew no sin, and who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth —of Him too who at last was made sin. That holy spotless One, perfect in every thought of His heart, in every word of His lips, in every deed of His life before God, at length, in grace, gave Himself a victim, a sacrifice, a substitute for poor sinners like you and me.

But are you sure this is a figure of the Lord Jesus Christ? I am sure; but if I had a doubt in my mind the twenty-ninth verse of John i. would suffice to settle it. Who but He could take away the sin of the world? Let us also hear what the testimony of the apostle Paul on the point is. He says, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. v. 7). The apostle John also gives us a confirmatory word. When the soldier pierced the blessed Lord's side, after His death on the cross, he distinctly says that His legs were not broken that the scripture (Exod. xii. 46) should be fulfilled (see John xix. 36). It was because the paschal lamb was a type of the blessed Son of God, the true Lamb of God, who was going to die for sinners in a yet distant day, that the children of Israel were enjoined not to break a bone thereof. The apostle

Peter goes yet further, saying: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot"—the very words we have here—"who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." The giving of His Son to be the atoning Lamb was no after-thought on the part of God, consequent upon man's sin. It was the eternal purpose of God, who knew what man's history would be. Possibly you may ask, Why did God allow man to sin? He let man be a sinner that He might Himself be the Saviour. He let man fall in order that He might show how He could meet his ruin, and bless him. The giving of His Son was the eternal thought of God.

When the Holy Ghost here says, "The precious blood of Christ," does your heart respond and say, "Precious blood indeed it is"? It is not often the Spirit of God uses adjectives, but is it not sweet to hear these words, "Redeemed . . . with the precious blood of Christ"? Remember nothing else can meet the claims of God, nothing can wash you whiter than snow, save that precious blood. But, thank God, that blood can do it. It has cleansed and redeemed untold millions, and if still unsaved, you may now taste of the saving, the cleansing, redeeming, emancipating power of the precious blood of Christ. The devil hates, and men despise it, but God honours it, faith prizes it, and the saints of God rejoice in it.

Israel's instructions on this memorable night were very clear. The lamb was to be kept till the four-

teenth day, and then it was to be killed, the blood was to be sprinkled, and the body was to be roasted with fire. It was to be slain between the evenings. "And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts, and on the upper doorpost of the houses, wherein they shall eat it." And now observe what God says: "And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire." Eat not of it raw. Many a man is trying to do this. Many a one will say, I believe that Jesus was a good man, that He was a holy man, that He was a great example, and that He died a martyr for the truth; I admire His life, and I believe that He sealed the doctrines of His life with the devotedness of His death. Ah, that will not do. The flesh must be eaten roast with fire. What does God mean by that? That nothing could deliver me from Satan's power, nothing could clear me of guilt, and bring me to God, but the atoning sufferings—the sacrifice—the death and bloodshedding—the propitiatory offering of the blessed Saviour, the Lamb of God. Christ was made sin for us, He sustained the judgment the sinner deserved. God forsook Him on the cross,—when His soul was made an offering for sin—and that is where and how propitiation was effected.

If you look at the atonement, there are two sides to it, the Godward and the manward. Propitiation is Godward, glorifying Him about sin; substitution is manward, delivering him from his sins, and their consequences. Propitiation is the meeting of the claims of God's nature, His holiness, His majesty, His truth and righteousness, and all these claims have been

perfectly and divinely met in the atonement which the Lord Jesus Christ rendered when He died on Calvary's tree, having there borne the judgment of God, His forsaking, and the hiding of His face, the darkness and the smiting, and all the suffering that the bearing of sin must entail. Remember that sin and God can only meet for judgment, either at the cross, where the blessed Saviour bore the judgment of God in respect to sin, that the one believing in Him might never bear it; or else at the great white throne where the sinner will be judged himself. My sin must meet God's judgment, my sin must have expended against it the holy righteous indignation of God's nature, and there are but two places where the judgment of God is expressed and borne—the cross, where the Son of God suffered in the room and stead of the sinner, or the lake of fire, where the sinner suffers for himself. You will have to make your choice, you cannot escape it.

You may dream about God being merciful, and good, and loving, and kind, by which you mean you hope that God will make light of sin. People say, Of course I know I am a sinner, but God is good, and in the day of judgment will He not have mercy upon me? No, He will not; simply because it will then be a day of judgment, not of grace. When people talk about knowing they are sinners, but that God is good, and will be merciful, it simply means that they think very lightly of their sins, and they hope God will do the same. They are mistaken. God thinks so much about your sins and mine that His own Son had to suffer death and judgment, in order that those sins borne by Him, and suffered for on the cross, might not be suffered for by us.

"Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof," was the significant order to Israel, and it speaks to us also. The soul is to take in the beauty and excellence and perfection of Christ in His life, and then to feed upon His death. It is quite true that the will and wickedness of man were expressed in putting the blessed Lord upon the cross, but, forget it not, that Christ "must needs suffer"; there was the necessity of love on His side, as well as the fact of sin on our side. See how beautifully all this comes out here in type.

Now what have I to do in order to obtain salvation? Christ has died and risen again—is not that all that I have to believe, and is not that enough? No. There was something that every household in Israel had to do that night in Egypt, in order to escape the judgment of God. The Lord declares distinctly, "I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt." Why the first-born? Because the first-born expresses what man is in nature. The judgment of God is upon man *as man*. It matters not whether he be learned or ignorant, religious or irreligious; man is a sinner under sentence of death, and he must meet it. The first-born is the one in whom all hopes are centred, in whom all expectations are wrapped up, and he must die. How can he be delivered? Only by the sweet and precious truth of substitution, another must die in his stead, if he is to be delivered.

"I will execute judgment," saith the Lord; but He adds, "The blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you

to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt" (ver. 13). Here they have God's promise. Observe at this point they only hear what God wanted, and how they are to be saved. They are not yet saved, they are not yet under the shelter of the blood in this verse. It is like the preaching of the gospel, so to speak. The Lord is here preaching the gospel to Israel, and He tells them, You must kill the lamb, you must take its blood and sprinkle the lintel, and the two side posts of the doors of your houses. And why not on the threshold also? Ah, that is reserved for the unbelief of this learned, educated, cultured, highly scientific nineteenth century. It is reserved for the last decade of this century, above all years, to bring out cold, scathing, heartless criticism of the atonement, and to do what? To trample the blood of Christ beneath the feet. God said, Put the blood upon the lintel, and the two side posts, and that is where faith puts it, above me, and around me; but where does scientific criticism put it to-day? I will tell you. Our latter-day critics put it on the threshold; they trample the blood of Christ beneath their feet.

This is a solemn indictment, but you know that what I say is true, and that men boldly set aside the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. God's Word declares, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. ix.). And what, by-and-by, will be the song of the redeemed in glory, addressed to the Lamb? "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by"—what? Is it by Thy life, by Thy example, by helping us to follow, and walk in Thy steps? No, it is *by "Thy blood."*

The instructions to Israel were plain and simple: Take a lamb, whose life is altogether apart from yours, kill the lamb, pour its blood into a basin, and put it on the lintel, and two side posts, and then, says God, when I pass through the land in judgment, "*the blood* shall be to you for a *token* . . . and when *I see the blood* (mark that), *I will pass over you*, and the plague (death) shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt" (ver. 13). Then I ask, What can shelter me from the plague, what can shelter me from God's judgment? The blood, and nothing but the blood: the blood of Jesus, the blood of God's own dear Son, the blood of the Lamb of God. Tell me, are you sheltered, have you that blood between you and God? Well, if never before, let it be there for the future.

It is when God sees the blood *sprinkled* that He passes over, and judgment is stayed. The shedding of the blood was the rendering to God of that which His holiness demanded, and which His word enjoined but when the life of the lamb was taken, and the blood *sprinkled* on the lintel, and the two doorposts, we get what Scripture speaks of as "the obedience of faith." How is a man saved? By faith in Christ, and in the testimony of God to the work of His dear Son. True, it is Christ Himself in whom we trust, but the testimony of God is this, that while we trust in His Person—in what He is in Himself—the soul that believes in Him comes under the benefit of all the work He has wrought. No doubt the expression is used, "Through faith in his blood" (Rom. iii. 25), but, generally speaking, what we have in Scripture is this: My faith rests in a Person, the eternal Son of God, who came down here that as man He might die

for me, and rise again; He wins the confidence of the heart, and then, when I trust in Him, I get the full benefit of the work He has accomplished.

The directions as to the sprinkling of the blood are very significant, and we should weigh them well, and see if we have acted similarly. "Ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning. For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you." It is when He sees the *blood* that God passes over, not when He sees your faith, or your repentance, or your prayers, or anything else but the blood.

But observe the importance of this last instruction. "Take a bunch of hyssop." I am persuaded that there are some in this audience to-night whose hands have never grasped the bunch of hyssop. I do not doubt that you believe in the fact of the death of Jesus, but, I ask you, Have you taken the bunch of hyssop, and sprinkled the blood on the lintel? If you had passed down a street in Egypt that night, you would have seen some houses where the blood was on the lintel — outside, not inside — but you might have come to a house where no blood was to be seen. And yet that man was an Israelite, and had heard God's instructions. You ask the man, How is it there is no sprinkled blood, have you no lamb? Yes, I have a lamb. Is it killed? Yes, and roasted too. But I see no blood. Oh, no, the blood is in the

basin. But why is it not outside? Well, I do not see much importance in having the blood there, so long as the lamb has been killed, and the blood shed: I do not like to have the blood on my house, and to put myself up for observation in that way. Surely it cannot make much difference where the blood is when it has been shed. The person who believes merely that Jesus has died, is just like the man who has never sprinkled the blood. He has accepted the truth of the atonement, but it has never been applied to his own soul. What does the bunch of hyssop mean? I believe it signifies the sense, always wrought in the soul when the gospel reaches it, of what I am as a sinner: it is repentance, self-judgment: I am brought low in my own eyes, I am brought to the sense that I am a lost man, and I turn to the cross, and shelter myself beneath the blood of the Lamb.

The hyssop has a very distinct place in Scripture. Solomon "spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall" (1 Kings iv. 33), *i.e.*, the greatest and the least of the products of the vegetable kingdom. The hyssop was a little shrub that did not even take root in the ground, but came out between two stones in the wall. Have I any part in my own redemption? Yes. What is it? My sins, that is all. And of course, if I have a real sense of what my sins are, I shall be bowed before God in repentance, and self-judgment, and the acknowledgment of those sins. And I believe the bunch of hyssop expresses what goes on in the soul of the convicted sinner, contrition before God, in the sense of my sins, and of what I am. My sins would have brought me into death and judgment before God, and nothing but the blood of the Substitute

can meet the necessity of my case, so, in faith, and in the sense of my need, I put that blood between my soul and God, and I am safe.

When midnight came in the land of Egypt, and God came out to judge, what was the event? Where there was no sprinkled blood there was no salvation, no shelter. And here to-night, where there is no blood sprinkled, there is no salvation. You say, Oh, yes, I believe the blood of Christ was shed. True, but is it sprinkled? Have you in real, simple faith, fled to the Saviour, and put your guilty, godless soul under the shelter of His precious blood? If not, heed the Word of God, I beseech you: take hold of the bunch of hyssop just now, and get down before the Lord, in the acknowledgment of your sins, and say, Lord Jesus, Saviour, I trust in Thee, and in Thy precious blood. He would love to hear you say—

> "Just as I am, without one plea,
> But that Thy blood was shed for me,
> And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,
> O Lamb of God, I come."

Where the blood was sprinkled, salvation was the result; and where no blood was seen, the plague fell. God passed through the land that night in judgment, and "there was not a house where there was not one dead" (ver. 30). In the houses of Israel there was one dead—the lamb, the victim, the substitute. In the houses of Egypt there was one dead—the first-born. In the houses of Israel the lamb had died in the room and stead of the first-born, and that brought peace to many a household that night. So now the poor sinner can say, Jesus has died in my room and stead, and I am free.

You might have gone up to a young man in one of

the households of Israel, who was the first-born, and asked him, How is it with you to-night? Have you peace? Perfect peace! How do you feel? I do not rest on my feelings, but on the word of Jehovah. The blood is upon the lintel. It was father's work to put it there, but I assure you I took good care to see that it was done; I was too much interested in the matter not to see to it; my life would go this night if the blood were not there. But the blood is there, and Jehovah has said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." And are you at rest? At perfect rest. The blood is the basis of my peace, not what I feel.

Peace is not a feeling, it is not an emotion, it is not an experience, it flows from the fact that the claims of God have been met by the Lamb of God, and God respects His precious blood. As one has said, the blood of Jesus has reached, and touched the very memory of God, for we read in Hebrews x., "Your sins and your iniquities I will remember no more." The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins, but the blood of Jesus does. Its value God alone knows. You and I do not know the value of the blood of Christ. We do value it surely, but our value of it is very poor and inadequate. God knows its value perfectly, He esteems its worth fully, and He says to you and me, Trust that blood; get under its shelter. If your soul and mine can each answer, "Lord, I trust it," then God says, I shall treat you according to My estimate of the value of that blood, not according to yours. And that is wherein peace lies. It does not rest on your estimate, or mine, of the blood of Christ, but on God's estimate of it. And what is God's estimate of it? He estimates it so highly, that there is nothing too great for Him to do on the ground of it. He delivers

you from judgment, and brings you to glory, on the ground of the shed blood of His own dear Son. And more than that, it will give you the sweetest peace and confidence of heart towards God.

I shall never forget once drawing near to the bedside of an old lady, whose husband had died a few months before, and whose children were all gone too, and she herself was very low. I said to a relation who was there, "Do you think your aunt has made her will?" She begged me to ask herself, and I said to the old lady, "Mrs M——, have you got your worldly affairs all settled?" "Oh, yes," she replied, "they are all settled; I have nothing to think about." "And what about your spiritual affairs?" for I knew she was a Christian, but I thought I should like to hear what she had to say. She opened her great eyes, and, fixing them on me, rejoined, "I could do nothing at that; the blood of Christ, in its solitary dignity, has settled all." Her earthly affairs she and her lawyer had settled easily enough, but, as to her spiritual affairs, "the blood of Christ, in its solitary dignity, has settled all." Charming reply! Has the blood of Christ settled all for you, my friend? It had for her, it has for me, and for every believer, who by-and-by will sing the praises of the Lamb.

Now, I urge you, if you have never yet found shelter under the precious blood of Jesus, trust Him without delay, get sheltered now; you have no time to delay. If you are a wise man, woman, or child, you will bow down before the Saviour this moment and say, "Just as I am, I come to Thee." Put the blood between your soul and God, and at once you have the assurance of God's own word, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." He did pass over Israel's

first-born; not one of them died; they were all delivered, and by what? The precious blood of the lamb. God will deliver *you* similarly if you rest on Christ, and His precious blood.

WHEN first, o'erwhelmed with sin and shame,
To Jesus' cross I trembling came,
Burdened with guilt and full of fear,
Yet drawn by love, I ventured near,
And pardon found, and peace with God,
In Jesus' rich, *atoning blood.*

My sins are gone, my fears are o'er,
I shun God's presence now no more;
He sits upon a throne of grace,
He bids me boldly seek His face;
Sprinkled upon the throne of God,
I see that rich, *atoning blood.*

Before His face my Priest appears,
My Advocate the Father hears;
That precious blood, before His eyes,
Both day and night for mercy cries;
It speaks, it *ever* speaks to God,
The voice of that *atoning blood.*

By faith that voice I also hear;
It answers doubt, it stills each fear;
The accuser seeks in vain to move
The wrath of Him whose name is Love:
Each charge against the sons of God
Is silenced by th' *atoning blood.*

Here I can rest without a fear;
By this, to God I now draw near,
By this, I triumph over sin;
For this has made, and keeps me clean
And when I reach the throne of God
I'll laud that rich, *atoning blood.*

CHAPTER VIII.

A Night in the Sea.

SALVATION.

Exod. xiv., xv. 1, 2.

IT is very interesting to observe that we find nothing about salvation in Scripture till we reach the chapter which I have read to you. I quite admit that you find the word in the Book of Genesis, where Jacob, speaking prophetically, says, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord" (Gen. xlix. 18). But clearly it had not come then. Now Exodus xiv. reveals to us the salvation of the Lord. I grant you it is but a type, a figure, but it is a beautiful figure of that which God has done for us in our day.

We have seen in Exodus xii. the wonderful truth of the death of the lamb, the substitutionary lamb that died instead of the first-born; but, in order to be really clear before God, in order to really know what God's salvation is, I must have resurrection as well as death. Resurrection is the backbone of the gospel. Leave out the resurrection, and you have but half the gospel. Quite true, it was the work which the Lord Jesus Christ did on the cross that put our sins away, it was the atoning efficacy of the blood of the Lamb that met all the claims of God in righteousness, but still resurrection, the resurrection of Christ, is the

evidence, and the proof, of the completeness, and value of the work which He has done for His people.

I have no doubt whatever that the Red Sea—the passage of the children of Israel through the Red Sea—is a figure of the death and resurrection of Christ for His people, for us, *i.e.*, that He died for our sins, and was raised again for our justification. The result is, that the moment Israel got through the Red Sea they began to sing. While they were in Egypt there was no song. What were they doing? Sighing, crying, weeping, groaning—they were miserable slaves. Even when they were at Pi-hahiroth (chap. xiv. 2, 9), what were they doing? Fearing and trembling; they were in dread, and distress of soul. But the moment they had gone through the Red Sea, by the path which God had opened for them—the moment typically they had accepted death, and got into resurrection—what do I find? They begin to sing; they sing a triumphant song to the Lord. And what is the burden of the song? "The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation" (xv. 2). It is what the Lord is, and what the Lord has done. Well might they sing, because, from the sunny heights of resurrection, they look down and see all their foes dead on the seashore, not one of them left. They are brought now to have to do with God, and to know God as their Saviour, and they can sing with happiness and truth, "The Lord is become my salvation." They are *saved*, and they *know* they are saved.

I meet a great many people nowadays who are hoping, trying, and longing to be saved, but I do not meet many who are bold enough to say, "Thank God, I am saved, for *He* has saved me." Can you say that yet? Come, honestly, my friend, can you say, "I have

obtained God's salvation, I am a saved soul by divine grace"? Is it presumption to say so? No, it is not presumption to boast in what God does. It would be great presumption if it were something in which you and I had any hand. But you will observe here that the people of Israel *stand still*, and the Lord *does everything*, and, when *He* has done everything, what do they do? They turn and exalt, and praise Him, and give Him glory. We read, "Thus the Lord saved Israel" (xiv. 30). Why do you not let Him save you, and then you could likewise sing to Him, as the Author and Source of your salvation? There are many souls to-day who are desiring salvation, and would like to have it, but they have not got it, because they have never learnt what this precious scripture unfolds, in figure, viz., that Christ not only died for our sins, but that He rose again for our justification, and that consequently the one who believes in Him who has died and been raised again, is linked with Him in the place where He now is—in resurrection. And as a result, there is peace and joy and gladness in the soul.

Now, I will tell you where hosts of people are spiritually. Being a doctor, I go into the houses of all classes, and in numbers of them I find a picture, to which people are uncommonly attached. It depicts a stone cross, a fearful storm raging, and a poor, wretched, unhappy-looking woman clinging to this cross, with despair printed on her face. And people think this is Christianity. Christianity! It is an utter travesty of Christianity. Oh, you say, do you make light of the cross? God forbid. With the apostle Paul, I say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." But does that picture teach me Christianity? Not at all. And why? Because

the truth of Christianity is that the storm has gone by, the Saviour has passed through it, and risen out of it, and faith leads the soul, not to the foot of an empty cross, but to the feet of the ascended Saviour, where there is "neither enemy nor evil occurrent." The storm is over, the forces of evil are dealt with, and the soul, instead of being in fear, and anxiety, and distress, is in the possession of solid, divinely given peace—in the assurance that it is saved, because connected with the risen Saviour, who has passed through death and judgment, and is now at God's right hand.

Many a poor soul nowadays carries about a cross with or without a figure of Christ upon it. The idea is to remember the death of Christ. But Christ is not on the cross now, nor is He in the grave. Where is He? He is risen. Hear the glad tidings. I declare to you a risen Saviour, a Saviour triumphant over death and the grave. He went into death, and met the judgment of God in the moment of His death; He bore the whole weight of the wrath and vengeance of God against man's sin and guilt. He atoned for that guilt when He died; when He tasted death He annulled it; in His passage through death, He met him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and destroyed him. But, now, what has happened? He is alive from the dead, He has risen, and ascended. It is a risen, triumphant, and glorified Saviour at God's right hand that I preach to you, and the believer is entitled to know that Christ is his Saviour, that Christ is his peace, that his sins are forgiven, and that he belongs now to that Saviour. He is absolutely saved, and he is entitled to give thanks. His doubts and fears are for ever gone; he knows that his sins have been swept away by the blood of Jesus, and that the power of the

enemy has been broken by His death. The day of doubt, and fear, distress, and anxiety is gone by for ever; and if you have the picture I have described in your house, I advise you, before you go to bed to-night, to put it in the fire. Why? Because if any one comes into my house, I should not like to give him a false impression of what Christianity is, and I conclude you will feel similarly. Christianity tells me of a victorious, triumphant Man, at the right hand of God, who has dashed in pieces the power of the enemy; who has been exalted, a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance, and remission of sins, to all who believe in His name. It is resurrection you must know.

I do not wonder that the devil made a great noise in Acts iv., when the apostles preached and taught the people the truth. What did they preach? They "preached through Jesus the resurrection from among the dead" (ver. 2). If they had only preached Jesus as having lived on the earth, the devil would have said, You may go on and preach that as much as you like, because He died. But, said the apostles, God has raised Him from the dead. One has gone into death, on whom death had no claim; and He has annulled it, and now He is alive from the dead in righteousness at God's right hand. He is the life, and the righteousness, and the sanctification, and redemption of every soul that simply believes in Him. I do not wonder that the devil sought that day to put the apostles in prison, because the resurrection, which they preached, was the absolute proof of his utter defeat by Christ, and of the abolition of the power of death. Death, which was the wages of man's sin, being annulled, Christ's resurrection proved that sin had been put away. It is freely granted that our sins took Him

into death, but what took Him out of it? God, in righteousness, took Him out of death, and set Him at His own right hand in glory, and the consequence is that the one who believes in Christ is associated with Him where He is.

The blessed truth of the gospel is this (and unless you know it, you have not really tasted God's salvation—you have not got peace and solid rest in your soul), that He, who was ever the Father's delight, came down into this scene, that He became a man, and as a man was so sinless, spotless, and perfect, that death had no claim upon Him, and that then the Man on whom death had no claim has gone in grace into death for me—for the man upon whom death *had* a claim. Further, He who knew no sin, was made sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He has taken *our* place in death, and God, having raised Him from the dead, through grace now gives us *His* place when we believe on Him. It is a wonderful thing to be able to say, Christ took my place in shame, and sorrow, and suffering, death and judgment, and I, who believe in Him, get His place in life, and acceptance, and righteousness before God.

But you say, What has all that to do with Exodus xiv.? It is just exactly what the chapter teaches in figure. When the enemy is coming after Israel to overtake, and to destroy them, God says, "Go forward." And where do they go? They go upon dry land through that, which would, without the intervention of God, have been overwhelming destruction for them. They go right through the Red Sea, God Himself having opened a pathway for them through the waters, which form a wall on their right hand, and on their left, as this passage tells us twice over. And now we

find them on the other side, brought to God, the power of the enemy broken. They are saved, they know it, and they rejoice in the Lord accordingly.

Have you ever travelled that road? If not, I pray God you may learn what it is to travel it. The Lord give you to hear His own word, "Go forward." If you think it is right to be in a condition of doubt, and fear, and uncertainty, this scripture ought to undeceive you. Nay, nay, the Christian is now entitled to be in a place of nearness to God, in blessing, and favour, identified with Him who died and rose again.

In our last chapter we saw that the blood put on the lintel preserved the first-born, in the household that was obedient to God's command, from God's judgment. But the blood does much more than that. Not only does the blood of the Lamb screen us from the righteous judgment of God, not only does the blood of Jesus shelter us from God's righteous judgment upon us as sinners, but it sets us apart to God. "The wages of sin is death," but that is met by the blood of the Lamb, for, "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; *so* Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation" (Heb. ix. 27, 28). I beg you to observe the "*as*" and the "*so*." *As* it was appointed to you and me to die, and then to be judged, *so* Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many. He took the sinner's place in blessed grace, as Anne Steele's lines charmingly put it:—

"He took the guilty culprit's place,
He suffered in our stead:
For man, O miracle of grace,
For man the Saviour bled.

Faith can say, "For *me* the Saviour bled." That is chap. xii., but in chap. xiii. I find that the same blood of the Lamb, which shelters me from judgment, sets me apart at the same moment to God. As soon as the people are sheltered, the Lord says, They are mine. "Sanctify unto me all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast; it is mine" (ver. 2). He claims the soul that is sheltered by the blood of the lamb as belonging to Him. If any one can say truthfully, "I do rest on Jesus, and I am trusting in His work," even though you have doubts and fears, let me tell you this, If you believe in Jesus, and are resting on His precious blood alone for salvation, you belong to God, and He will never give you up. And more than that, He would give you to know personally, how full, and rich, and perfect, is the salvation He makes yours through the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the end of chap. xiii. the Lord comes down, and gives the people the sign of His presence, in the pillar of cloud, and of fire. He makes it manifest that they belong to Him. "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light; to go by day and night" (ver. 21). Who would not be a Christian? I have the Lord not only for my life, and my shelter, but also for my guide. If God's people wanted light by night, His presence was their light, in the pillar of fire; if they wanted shade by day, He spread His cloud over them.

What is the next thing? Pharaoh having learned that the people are on their way out of his dominions, of course makes a final effort to keep them back, and God now comes in to deliver them from his power.

The knowledge that I am sheltered by the blood of the Lamb from God's judgment does not give the knowledge of deliverance in my soul. Therefore in chap. xiv. God brings the people to Pi-hahiroth, which means, "The mouth of caverns." The Lord brings His people to a spot where He shows them what real liberty is. They must get clean out of Egypt, and so must you, beloved fellow-believer, get delivered out of the world. You say to me, Can you bring a man out of the world? I cannot, but the gospel can. When the gospel really gets into a man's heart, he gets the knowledge of the heavenly sphere, and of heavenly blessing and joy, and his heart is turned from the world. He gets out of Egypt. In what way? Through the knowledge of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, whereby his sins have been all blotted out, and he himself brought to God, through the work the Saviour has accomplished.

Satan of course will not let any soul go easily, he will try to hold it back if he can. So in our chapter Pharaoh comes out with all his forces after Israel, and the people are terrified. It is after people are converted, after they have made the first start, and turned round to serve the Lord, desiring to be for Him, that they learn the evil of their own hearts, and it is then that Satan brings pressure to bear upon them, to keep them from being for the Lord absolutely, and entirely. Pharaoh gathers together all his hosts to pursue them, and the people find themselves in a terrible fix. They look behind them and there are Pharaoh and his hosts; they look before them and there is death—the Red Sea—and on either hand mountains rise to the skies. Hence, Pharaoh thinks he will certainly overtake them and enslave them again.

Similarly Satan comes after the believer, with the thought that he is going to get him under his power again. But do not you be frightened: he never will. Once under the shelter of the blood, you are brought to God in all the value of the Saviour's finished work and that place you can never lose. You are like the sheep in Luke xv. The shepherd went after it, and when he found it, he put it on his shoulders. I once heard some one say, May not the sheep drop off on the road? Well, I do not read that it did. I read that he brought it home. No doubt if it depended on the sheep, it would slip off, but all depends on the shepherd. I have sometimes seen a man carrying a sheep on his shoulder in an awkward way, and the sheep almost falling off, but I read that the shepherd put the sheep on his *shoulders*, and there he holds the sheep. My safety depends on my Saviour, not on me.

I quite admit that there is faith on my part, and that salvation is through faith. But the point is this, it is the Saviour who sought me, and found me, and carries me. And here it is God who comes and says, I want you out of Egypt, and I mean to have you for Myself. With great difficulty Pharaoh is made to let them go, but afterwards he tries to get hold of them again. And this is where unestablished souls are so often frightened. Perhaps after all, they say, I may go back, I may fall away. What about that scripture in Peter which says, "The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire"? (2 Pet. ii. 22.) Well, why does the dog return to his vomit? Because he is a dog. And why does the sow return to wallowing in the mire? Because she is a sow, and nothing else. You may wash a sow as much as you like, you

cannot make a sheep of her. The point of the figure is that the sow has got an unclean nature, and delights in the mire. You never saw a sheep wallowing in the mire. You may have seen a poor sheep fall into a ditch and bleat to be taken out. And that is the case of a backslider. But a child of God is never called a dog or a sow. Those of whom Peter speaks never had been born again, never had received a new life or nature; they had been merely outwardly reformed. Before the sow was washed she was a dirty sow; after she was washed she was a clean sow, but a sow still, no matter what she was washed in. The devil has got all sorts of things in which to wash people. Moral reformation and ecclesiastical observances—quite apart from new birth, and the personal knowledge of Christ—are favourite receipts for salvation. I suppose when the sow was washed they tied her up to keep her clean. But you will find that putting a restraint upon nature merely, will not do. Some day the sow will gnaw the rope and reach the mire again. Why? Simply because she is a sow, and loves the mire, just as an unconverted man loves sin.

But when the grace of God gets into a man's heart, that man is new born, he has a new life and nature, with new tastes, and a new object, with heavenly hopes and aspirations. He is set up in this world a new man in the power of the Holy Ghost. He may fail, he may stumble and fall, but "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. xi. 29). The Lord Jesus Christ says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." It is

really *no one*—angel, man, or devil—can pluck them out of His hand. And why? "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John x. 27-29). The Lord Jesus looks upon the sheep as the precious gift of the Father to Him. You do not know how precious you are to Christ. Dear young believer, and old one too, would that you knew better the love of the Saviour's heart, and what a price He sets upon you. And is He going to let us go after He has bought us, and washed us in His blood? Nay, nay.

It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. viii. 33, 34). Will He condemn those for whom He died? Never!

To return to the figure in Exodus xiv., what is the first word Israel gets, as the enemy is seen approaching? "Fear ye not, *stand still*, and *see the salvation of the Lord*, which he will show to you this day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (vers. 13, 14). What is God's salvation? That Christ has gone down beneath the waves and billows of divine judgment, for His people, bearing their sins, enduring the judgment due to them, and He has risen again in the power of an accomplished work—an atonement by which God has been glorified—and what is the result? The power of the enemy is destroyed, and we are called to gaze on a risen Saviour, and an empty tomb.

You remember that on the resurrection morning an angel came down, and rolled away the stone from the Lord's sepulchre. What for? I have sometimes heard it said, To let Jesus out. God forbid such a thought. An angel roll away the stone to let my Saviour out? Never. He was out long before. He rose in the majesty of His own being, as a divine person. He could say, "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again." But, more than that, He was raised from the dead, by the glory of the Father, as the expression of the delight and satisfaction God found in His accomplished work. Why, then, was the stone rolled away? Not to let the Saviour out, but to let you and me look in, and see an empty tomb. I see the tomb empty, and the grave clothes all folded in order. I am prepared to shout—Hallelujah! My Saviour, who went into death for me, and for my sins, has come out of it, and now I can sing.

Why were the angels silent when they saw the empty tomb? They praised God when the Saviour was born in Bethlehem, but why were they silent in the day when He rose from the dead? The truth is this: they had no note that suited the occasion. It was not for angels that Jesus died, but for sinners like you and me, for the ungodly, the guilty, the lost, for those who were enemies. The angels had no song suited to the moment, but, if I may be allowed to say so, I can imagine that when they rolled back the stone, and said to the woman, "He is not here, for he is risen . . . come, see the place where the Lord lay," —I can imagine the angels saying, Surely these saved ones will begin to sing now. But, alas, they sang not: they knew not the truth of the resurrection, and what

it involved. And, indeed, that which was true on the resurrection morning is true to-day, in the history of many. How many a soul, that really trusts the Lord, does one find in doubt, and uncertainty, instead of rejoicing in a risen Saviour, and in the knowledge of an accomplished redemption? The truth is, they are not clear as to their salvation. They need to hear the word that fell on Israel's ear—"Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord."

Now, see what takes place? The Lord commands Moses to lift up his rod, and, as he stretches his rod over the sea, the waters divide, and what seemed certain death, becomes the means of salvation. "Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward," says the Lord; and as the hosts of Israel, in obedience, step forward into what looked like death, the sea divides, crystal walls of salvation rise up on either hand, and they march upon dry ground. Dry ground is four times mentioned in this chapter, as if God would in this figure emphasise the fact that the death and resurrection of Christ provide the solid ground on which faith puts its feet. Nature and flesh cannot tread this path. If they attempt it, as typified here by Pharaoh's action, there is nothing to be expected but judgment. But faith finds a firm footing there: "By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned" (Heb. xi. 29). Israel was safe, because their going into the sea was an act of real faith in, and obedience to the Word of God. The result is that as they pass in they find the way is clear, there is nothing to hinder them, and God Himself goes before them, as their light and guide. It was in the darkness of night this took place. The pall of night

was over the scene, but God's redeemed see their way clearly.

But what guidance have these escaped slaves got? They have light from God: divine light goes before them to show them the path which divine power had opened, and divine protection is flung over them. Pharaoh follows, and is getting a little near to Israel, but then what does the Lord do? He turns and goes from before them to get behind them, between them and Pharaoh. "The angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them; and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave *light by night* to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night" (vers. 19, 20). Pharaoh had said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them" (xv. 9); but what does the Lord answer? You will have to settle accounts with me, Pharaoh, before you touch one of My people; you will have to pass through the pillar of cloud and fire before you can reach them.

How beautiful for us to note this! Oh, young convert, dear fellow-Christian, be assured of this, that God's salvation is real, and the purpose and calling of God are without repentance. If you are under the shelter of the blood, you belong to God, He is your Saviour, and He Himself stands between His people, and the pursuing enemy. The enemy goes on, but presently God gives him his first check; the wheels of his chariots come off (ver. 25). Perhaps there is a man

in this hall to-night as daring and stubborn as Pharaoh. Let him mark this scene. God gave Pharaoh his warning before he met his doom. When their chariot wheels came off, that was a warning from God to those who were pursuing His people that night. The Egyptians perished with Pharaoh, because they heeded not the warning which God gave them. Similarly, sinners who do not think it worth while to give heed to the word of the Lord, will have Satan's judgment, they will share the doom of him who is god of this world. Unsaved friend, God is giving you your warning to-night, that death is ahead of you, and judgment, and the lake of fire after it, if you die in your sins. Be warned in time; turn to the Lord, and receive His salvation, and learn what His goodness is now.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and upon their horsemen." Moses did so, the waters returned, and the whole host of the Egyptians was engulfed. "There remained not so much as one of them." Blessed tidings for the believer, for the soul that has really turned to Jesus. He can look back, and see the power of the enemy broken, his sins gone, the judgment past. The judgment fell on Jesus, and He is risen, having exhausted the judgment, and destroyed the power of the enemy.

When the apostle John saw the Lord in the vision of Revelation i., and fell at His feet as dead, He said to him, "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hades and of death." He says as it were to John, and to you and

me, I have been down there where you were as sinners, under the sentence of death; I was there without sin, and death had no claim upon Me, but in grace I went right down into the very scene of death's dominion, the very stronghold of Satan's power, and I have overcome him in his stronghold, which was death. This blessed truth is wonderfully unfolded in Hebrews ii.: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (vers. 14, 15). He can now say: I am He that liveth, and was dead; I have been down to the very region of death, where your sin would have taken you; I have gone down into it in grace, and I have met the one who had the power of death; I have gone through the dark tunnel of the grave, and in my path through that tunnel, I have met him who had the power of death—symbolised by the keys—I have plucked the keys from his girdle, I have wrenched the sceptre from his hand. He is a defeated foe, and I am alive for evermore: fear not. Bless the Lord! I say from the bottom of my heart. I know a Saviour in glory who has overcome Satan, and put away my sins; He has burst the bonds of death, broken the bars of the tomb, and now in all His beauty and glory, He is the risen, ascended, glorified Saviour, at God's right hand. I trust Him, and He saves me, just as Israel that day was saved with God's salvation.

What does it mean, when it says in ver. 30, "Thus the Lord saved Israel"? It means that every foe was silenced, not an enemy was left. Is that the case

with your soul? It is the case with every one who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, for He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. As it is put in Colossians, "Ye are complete in him who is the head of all principality and power." I look up into the glory of God, and, far, far above the angels that never sinned I see a Man set down there,—a Man who is my Saviour, who went into death for my sins, who died my death, who is now risen from the dead: I am risen with Him, and accepted in Him. Where are my sins? Gone in the cross of Christ. Where are the enemies? Gone too. And where is the Saviour? Risen. And where are His people? Risen too, with Christ (Col. iii. 1).

Salvation is a very large word. It comprehends forgiveness, and deliverance, and peace, and the knowledge that I am justified. It is not only the knowledge that the Lord died for me, that He put away my sins, but that when He died I died, and when He rose I rose. What a blessed thing to have Jesus as your Saviour, to belong to Him, to have God's salvation, and to know it! It was after the Lord had saved Israel that they sang: and were they not entitled to sing? And what is the burden of their song? "I will sing unto the Lord, for *he* hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The *Lord* is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation;" &c. (Exod. xv. 1, 2). It is all coupled with a person, the person of the Saviour. He who possesses Christ has God's salvation.

Every believer in Christ is entitled to know what is presented here in type, and figure, and he can then sing sweetly, simply, and happily, "He is become my

salvation." And further, "He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation" (ver. 2). The moment you get redemption unfolded, in Scripture, you get also the thought of God dwelling with His people; that of course now is by the Holy Ghost. God dwells with us now: by-and-by we shall dwell with Him for ever, and this is what is taught further on: "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength *unto thy holy habitation*" (ver. 13), the end of the journey being anticipated. Ah, beloved friends, the Saviour brings out, and He brings in. If He has brought you out, He will not let you drop on the road. Our portion as believers is that we are saved, and we know it. Our salvation is of the Lord, and He Himself is the joy, and strength, and confidence of our hearts.

I remember going a while ago to see an old widow, in a little house in Edinburgh. She had tumbled down, and thought she had broken her thigh. I said to her, "How do you get on here all alone? Have you no one with you?" "No one all day," she said. "My granddaughter lives with me, but she goes out in the morning to her work, and does not come back till the evening." "And are you happy all through the day?" "Yes, I am quite happy, and no mistake. I have Christ for my Saviour, and I have got the Book which tells me all about Him, and I have a hymn-book too, and can sing His praises when I am all alone. I would not change places with her Majesty, Queen Victoria, on the throne, God bless her!" There was a poor lonely widow, who did not know where her next meal was to come from, who had not one near her, even to make her a cup of tea, and yet she would not change places with her Majesty the Queen. Why?

Because she had got Christ, Christ for her salvation, Christ for her strength, Christ for her peace, Christ for her joy. Happy woman! She is now with her Lord.

It is a grand thing to be a Christian. If you are not one, if you will not have God's salvation, forget not that you must have God's damnation. Whoever you are, let me plead with you. Come now to the Lord! Do not risk your precious soul by procrastinating another day. If you have never bowed to an ascended Saviour, and trusted Him, do so now. He says: "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out, for I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life" (John vi. 37-40). This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, and if there be an unsaved soul yet left in this hall, I say to you, my friend, Come to Jesus, and let Him save you just now. Then you will know the meaning of what He said in the house of Zacchæus: "This day is salvation come to this house." God's salvation is present, perfect, and personal. How did salvation come to the house of Zacchæus? Why, by Zacchæus simply receiving Jesus. You had better do the same. God grant you may.

CHAPTER IX.

A Night in a Camp.

APPROPRIATION.

2 Kings vi. 24-33, vii.

A FRIEND of mine once said to me, "Faith appropriates what love provides." What, then, has God provided for you and me? A free and a full salvation; and the only thing you and I have to do is to appropriate it. I know some people are greatly troubled, because they think there is an immense amount of feeling and experience to be gone through before it can be appropriated. Well, I do not deny that God works in a man's soul, and that He uses all sorts of means to bring a man into a condition of self-judgment, and repentance in His presence. But the point is this, it is not your repentance that leads God to goodness, it is God's goodness that leads you to repentance. Many people think a great deal about repentance—in fact, make a Saviour of it—but all such put it in the wrong place. Some one was finding fault with me lately for not preaching it enough. Perhaps I do not so often use the word as I might, but I like to preach so as to produce repentance. Repentance might be urgently pressed by the preacher for a lifetime, without any repentance in sinners being produced; but if a man is brought to see God's love and goodness

in providing, and offering him salvation, he will say, What a wretch I have been not to have accepted it! and he will repent without being aware of it.

Repentance comes before us in a very remarkable manner in this sixth chapter of Kings. When the people looked upon the king, what did they see? When he rent his clothes, they saw "sackcloth within upon his flesh" (vi. 30). Sackcloth all through Scripture is a sign of repentance. When Jonah preached his remarkable sermon to the Ninevites, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown," they all "put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them" (Jonah iii. 5). There never was a sermon in the world's history that produced such an effect as Jonah's eight words. The whole people of Nineveh, from the king and his nobles downward, repented. The Book of Jonah tells us they "believed God" (iii. 5), and the Lord Jesus Christ tells us in the New Testament that they "repented" (Luke xi. 32). Even the very cattle were covered with sackcloth. The Ninevites "believed God" when He warned them of coming judgment, and consequently repented, for, as has been well said, "Repentance is the tear-drop in the eye of faith."

My friends, if you have never repented yet, I say to you very frankly, it is high time you did. You may die in your sins to-night, and you will not repent then. There is no repentance in hell; there is plenty of remorse, plenty of regret, plenty of unavailing sorrow, plenty of weeping and wailing; tears may flow like rivers, but repentance is unknown, and salvation is never offered there. If you want to be saved, *now* is the time.

I find here that the king of Israel had a sense that

the hand of God was upon him and the nation, and was repentant. Picture to yourselves a large city, as Samaria was, beleaguered by a vigilant enemy, who had cut off every possible means of supply, until at length the bread was spent, the corn gone, the food done, and the besieged reduced to such a condition that an ass's head fetched nine pounds of our money. They were surely hungry, starving people in Samaria that day. Even the very mothers forgot their natural affection for their offspring. I believe there is not a mother now living whose blood does not boil as she reads this chapter. Think of a woman, a mother, actually boiling and eating her own child. Impossible, you say. No, women did it. God had said they would do it. In an earlier book, God said to His people that if they sinned, and departed from Him, they would be reduced to such a state that they would eat their own offspring (Lev. xxvi. 29), and here they do it. The Word of God never fails ; and the beauty of Scripture is this, that it paints man as he is, and woman as she is, and not as a historian or a novelist paints them. The difference between the Scripture and a novel is that the Scripture is true, and the novel false ; and the difference between Scripture and any human biography is, that the Scripture shows me exactly what a man is, what he can be and do, and how the grace of God can save him, and bring him to glory ; but when any one nowadays writes a biography, he tells all the nice things about his subject, and covers with the mantle of charity, so-called, all his little peccadilloes. The result is, that when you read a Christian's biography, you are usually discouraged, for you have to say, That is such a good man, he is not a bit like me. But the truth is this, that is not the man, it is only a bit of him.

Scripture tells me the truth about man, it sets him before me as he is. And we may as well start with the truth, that man is lost; every man, woman, and child is lost, and must perish eternally, unless saved by the sovereign grace of God. It will not be your own works that will save you. It was no work of the Samaritans, it was no work of the lepers, that saved them that day. No, it was the intervention of God in sovereign grace, and it is the same to-day. So far from man's works or merits having anything to do with it, it is when the sin of man has risen to its full height, that the gospel of God comes out.

The misery of this poor Samaritan woman you can imagine. She had made a bargain with another woman, that they were to eat her son one day, and the other woman's son the next. The other woman played her false, and hid her son, and she makes her complaint to the king. No wonder, when the king hears the tale, that he forgets himself, and rends his clothes. It is when people forget themselves that the truth comes out. No doubt the king was looking very much as usual outwardly. I do not doubt he was repenting in measure, and therefore had put on the sackcloth, but he did not want the people to know it. He did not wish anybody to know what was going on inside, and so he covered the sackcloth with his robes. This is like many a poor sinner, troubled, and distressed about his soul, but hoping nobody knows. Why, you young man, you would not for the world that your friends should know that you are an unconverted sinner, without peace after all, although a church member, and perhaps an office-bearer. You would not like, perhaps, to be as honest as a poor fellow who was hearing me preach some time ago in

Glasgow. He said, in answer to my question, "Are you saved?" "I am not saved, that is the truth, but I have been a precentor in a church for twenty years." Perhaps there is some one listening to me who has been a church member for ten, twenty, thirty, forty years, and yet is still unsaved. God grant you may be saved now.

The king had the sackcloth on inside, covered up by his robes. But that sort of repentance will not do. A man should be genuine, and honest, and open in the acknowledgment of his sin. It is not that I want display. No, no: but you must be real, whatever you be. God searches the heart, and tries the reins, He knows exactly what is in a man, and He will have you and me confess honestly what we are, lost sinners in our sins. You will say, It was a good thing that the king had the sackcloth on at any rate. I admit it, but there was something deeper than the sackcloth. There was the kingly robe outside, and he looked very well, but when the robe was torn the sackcloth was seen inside, and the people might say, What a nice state he must be in! But what was deeper than the sackcloth? Hatred of God, and of God's servant. "God do so, and more also to me," he said, "if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day" (2 Kings vi. 31). Underneath your religion, friend, there is deep-seated hatred of God, if you are not converted. Do you say, That is a very strong statement? It is what God says, "The carnal mind is enmity against God," and that is why you do not like to be spoken to about your soul. You like very well to talk about religion, in general terms, now and then, but if any one takes you by the button-hole, and tries to get to close quarters with you about your soul,

you do not like that. Why? Because you do not really love the Lord Jesus. If you loved Him, you would like to talk with any one about Him. If I were to get to close quarters with you, and talk to you about Jesus, it would be quite distasteful to you: you would not like it. Why? Because you are unregenerate. You do not know Jesus, and you do not love Him. If, on the other hand, you are anxious and aroused about your sins, it is quite another matter, and you will be glad to be spoken to.

The real state of the king's heart comes out when he says, May God slay me to-day if I do not slay Elisha. He is determined to become a murderer. Instead of owning his sins, instead of confessing that the frightful condition of the city was the direct, and legitimate fruit of his own sins against God, he tries to put the blame upon the prophet, and thus indirectly upon God Himself, and he sends his servant to take off Elisha's head. The servant goes down, and finds Elisha, the man of God, sitting in his house with some of the elders—the godly ones of Israel, I suppose—with him. Elisha knows what is going on. He says, "When the messenger cometh, shut the door, and hold him fast at the door: is not the sound of his master's feet behind him?" So determined is the king to see his threat executed, that he follows his servant to see that Elisha is killed. But where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound. In the very moment when the deep deadly hatred and opposition of the king to the Lord's servant is manifested, in that very moment God unfolds to the angry king, and the beleaguered city, the sweet tidings of what His grace and mercy will do for the hungry, and the needy. At that very moment Elisha is

commissioned of the Lord to issue a beautiful proclamation of grace.

There come into the house the king's messenger, to slay Elisha, the king himself, and the lord on whose hand he leaned. Now, says Elisha, having heard what you have thought and said about me, let me tell you what God's thoughts are about you: He is going to save and deliver you, and that at the moment of your deepest guilt, when your sin and enmity against Him have risen to their full height: "Thus saith the Lord, To-morrow, about this time, shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria." What did that mean? It meant salvation for the Samaritans. Nobody could doubt that it meant that, within twenty-four hours, the common necessaries of life would be abundant, and that barley meal was to be sold at three-farthings a pound, and the finest flour for a penny-halfpenny a pound. Those were not famine prices. The Lord says, By this time to-morrow you shall have things cheaper and better than ever you have known them before.

This was salvation for those starving, perishing people, though, I grant you, it was salvation for a shekel of silver. Thank God, I have better news for you than Elisha had for the Samaritans. There is for you, poor hungry sinners, salvation, not to-morrow for a shekel of silver, but now, this very moment, for nothing. I ask you not to think of buying God's salvation, or working for it, or earning it; you have but to appropriate it. The prophet may tell the good news for "to-morrow," but I have good news for to-day—this very moment. The beauty and the

wonder of the gospel is this, that when man's sin had risen to its full height, then it was that God brought out, and published salvation. The cross of Christ was the meeting-place of all the principles that could be found at work in the heart of God and in the heart of man. Looking at man's side, I find him refusing God, refusing the Saviour, the Son of God come in grace among men. We must never forget that this world has refused the blessed Son of God. You may tell me you did not refuse Him, you did not cry, "Away with him." I grant you that you and I were not living at that moment, we were not present when Jesus was brought in and condemned by Jew and Gentile, but, whoever you are, you were represented there. You remember that His crime, His charge, "This is Jesus the king of the Jews," was written in letters of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. The religious Jew, the learned Greek, and the martial Roman, all gave their consent to the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the very leaders of religious thought were those who hounded on the people to clamour for His blood. Pilate was anxious to get Him off. He declared, "I find no fault in him, I will therefore chastise him, and let him go," but the people and their leaders would not have it. Pilate sent Him to Herod, hoping to get rid of Him, and when He came back he wanted again to let Him go, but the people cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him."

Then an idea strikes his mind. He always released a prisoner at that time as an act of clemency. He sends down to the cell, and brings up Barabbas the murderer, and Barabbas is put side by side with Jesus, that the people may make their choice. There you have the man who has imbrued his hands in the

blood of his fellow, the blood-stained robber Barabbas, and by his side you see Jesus, the holy spotless Saviour, the Son of God. Pilate says, "Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you?" With one voice the answer comes, "Not this man, but Barabbas." Then says Pilate, "What shall I do with Jesus that is called Christ?" "Crucify him, crucify him," is the reply. Pilate might wash his hands, and the people might say, "His blood be on us and on our children," but the fact remains that the world united to murder Him. Peter afterwards accused the Jewish nation of this: "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life" (Acts iii. 14). The world, therefore, to this day stands charged with the murder of the Son of God. Do not forget this, you who are of the world. Ye worldlings, who are not Christ's, lay hold of this solemn truth, that you are part and parcel of the world that has been dyed and stained with the blood of the Son of God. And remember, too, that God will yet deal with this world for the rejection and murder of His Son.

But there is another side to the cross. In the very moment when the bitter hatred and enmity of man's heart to God came out in the refusal of Christ, and nailing of Him to a tree, God seized the opportunity to have the question of sin settled for ever, to have a work accomplished by which sins could be put away, and the sinner righteously saved. That which demonstrated the depth of the iniquity of man's heart unfolded at the same time the depth of the love of God's heart. While it is true that man's wickedness and hatred put Christ upon the tree, it is equally true that God in love gave His Son, and that Jesus in

grace "gave himself, a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

In the cross of the Saviour I see the full flood tide of the evil of man's heart; but, thank God, high and black as was the tide of evil that culminated that day, there was a tide higher and deeper still,—the tide of divine love, which rose to its loftiest height then, when the Saviour gave Himself for the very people who slew Him, and when the Son of God died for His murderers and His foes. "Hear ye the word of the Lord," I may well say, To-day is salvation proclaimed to you through Him who died and rose again. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things." Observe it is not all who work, but *all who believe*. Now, the work of redemption having been finished, atonement having been made, the sin-offering having been presented to God and accepted, and all having been done that God required, or the Saviour could do for sinners, the gospel comes out in its own sweetness. The Holy Ghost comes down from heaven to tell the wonderful news that not only are the claims of God met and satisfied, but that the power of the enemy is broken. That is what we saw in our last night scene.

We have seen the Son of God coming into the world as Saviour; that man was in such a condition that he needed salvation; that the Son of God died as a substitute to meet the claims of God against the sinner in righteousness, and that the power and opposition of the enemy have been broken that the sinner might be set free. What then remains for you and me? To appropriate, to lay hold of, to enjoy,

what the goodness of God presents to us in our need and misery. That is the point of the interesting night scene now before us.

When the good news of an abundance of food "to-morrow" was announced by Elisha as the word of the Lord, there was, of course, the well-dressed sceptic in the audience of that day (there may be many such found in this day), but what good did his scepticism do him? Do you not think the hungry starving people of Samaria would be glad to know they would be delivered within twenty-four hours? Was it not grand gospel, for some one going out from Elisha's house to be able to tell the people, You will be saved in twenty-four hours; we have the word of the Lord for it? That was a grand gospel for the Samaritans, but there is a better gospel for the souls who hear my voice now—the pardon of your sins where you sit this moment through the faith of Jesus.

A work has been wrought by the Son of God that enables God to come out in righteousness and relieve His own heart, as He dispenses the gospel, and meets the need of the most miserable and wretched sinner He can find. And I will tell you who will get the blessing first — the most miserable. Of all the wretched people of Samaria that day who first got the blessing God proclaimed? The four leprous men whose sad state precluded their even being admitted inside the gate. Yes, they are the men to get the relief first, as we shall see. And this exalted lord, on whose arm the king leans, what does he say when he hears Elisha's message of mercy and salvation? A scornful smile plays upon his lips, and he says, with a cold cynicism which is common enough in our day, "Behold, if the Lord would make windows in

heaven, might this thing be?" I do not believe such nonsense as that we are going to be saved in twenty-four hours. Look at the hosts of the Syrians all round the city. I do not believe anything of the kind. So said the infidel, the sceptic, of Elisha's day. But he got a solemn reply: "Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof." He had his warning too. That lord had a large family. I am persuaded he has many descendants living to-day. They hear the gospel, they listen to it, but they do not believe it. It is too good to be true, some say; others, that they need some works of their own in order to be saved.

I am sometimes accused of leaving out works, and of giving people nothing to do. I will tell you why. If I gave them something to do for salvation, they could not do it. A friend of mine once saw a boat with two men in it which had been run into by a steamer, and was sinking, when a lifeboat was sent to save them. Now I quite admit what they were doing when the lifeboat went to them; they were baling out the water as well as they could from their damaged boat, and they were crying for help. But what saved them? It was the lifeboat. And right glad they were to be taken out of their own old, ruined, sinking boat, and be placed in the lifeboat. So must it be with you. You have to get out of your own old boat of works, and efforts, and rest on Jesus, and Jesus alone. And what is the reason why so few people really receive the gospel? Because they think they can do something themselves; because they are not, in repentance, brought down to utter nothingness in the presence of God. They are not, if I may so say, where Christ can save them. Whom did He come to save? The lost,

the ungodly, the guilty, the helpless. "To him that *worketh not*, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. iv. 5).

Why have you never yet been saved? The reason is very simple: I do not think you know you are lost. You are like a man who fell overboard the other day in a harbour. He could not swim, and very soon the cry went round, "A man drowning." On the quay stood a splendid young fisherman, the finest swimmer in the place, who had saved many a life, and everybody cried, "Jim, Jim, go in and save him!" Jim came and looked into the water, and there was the poor fellow struggling violently, and crying, "I cannot swim, I cannot swim." Jim made no movement, and the crowd began to cry, "Shame." But Jim folded his arms, and looked on like a statue. The murmurs of the crowd grew louder, as the poor fellow went down under water, and Jim never moved a muscle. The man came up, continued struggling, but was evidently getting weaker, and still Jim stood on the quay. He went down a second time, and came up again, but now there was no struggling, and as he was about to go down the third time, Jim was seen to slip off his coat and boots, and prepare to jump in. As the sinking man threw up his arms, his strength exhausted, Jim plunged in like an arrow, caught him, and saved him. Said the crowd, "Jim, why did you not go in before?" "He had too much strength," replied the rescuer. "If I had gone in sooner he would have drowned me. I should not have saved him." That is the reason why you, though miserable, are still unsaved. You have not got down low enough. You have never known salvation yet because you have never taken the

place of being a lost man or a lost woman. You are trying to do something, not knowing that all is done.

Now, these lepers knew they were lost. They were outside the gate, and they thus wisely reasoned: "Why sit we here until we die? If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die" (vii. 3, 4). They have the sentence of death on them, and so have you, my friend, but you may get life. Well, they conclude that they will go forth, as they think, to meet their enemies; and when they go out, expecting to meet foes—just like a poor sinner when he comes to God, whom he thinks is his foe—what do they find? A feast, and a royal one too, for all they needed was there. Sinner, you do not know what you have missed by not coming to the Saviour all these years, but if you will be wise now, you will follow the example of these simple men. They go out in the twilight (ver. 5), hoping nobody will see them, or pay attention to them. They get to the camp of the Syrians, and all is quiet. They come near a tent, and listen, but there is no sound. What does it mean? The fact is, God has cleared the scene of the enemy, and left the spoil for them to appropriate.

Can you not apply this? There is nothing to hinder your getting God's blessing now; every foe is gone. Sin has been put away, the power of the enemy has been broken, Christ has annulled death. The Son of God has come into the prison-house of death, and what has He done? He has burst open the door, He has broken all its bolts and bars, and spoiled the lock,

and it is well to remember that Satan cannot repair that lock, or put back those bars. He tells you that you cannot be saved, that you are too bad a sinner to be saved, and that you dare not come to Jesus—he tells you a lie. I tell you that you may come, and you ought to come to Christ, and if never before, you ought to come this very moment to Him. The door of the dungeon has been opened by the mighty Son of God, and all you have to do is to march out into the light of day, and feast on the good things that the love of God has provided for the needy and the lost. Appropriate what His love provides.

Whom do the lepers find in the camp of the Syrians? Nobody, not an enemy to be seen. They go into a tent, and what do they get? A good big loaf, and a nice bottle of water. They eat and drink. That is what the sinner needs—bread and water—the bread of life, and the water of life—and Christ declares, "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Come to Jesus, and your hunger shall be met, and your thirst satisfied for ever, for He says, "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."

"And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it" (ver. 8). The lepers eat and drink till they begin to feel satisfied, and then enrich themselves. They had not had such a meal for ever so long. And when their hunger and thirst are satisfied, what next?

Why, here is a bag of gold, and there a bag of silver; and as for clothes, they never saw such garments in their lives. So they load themselves with silver, and gold, and raiment, and go and hide their treasures. They were not only saved, but enriched. God not only pardons the sinner, but He enriches him, makes him His child, and gives him a place in Christ. Silver, in Scripture, typifies *redemption;* gold, *divine righteousness;* and the raiment tells of *fitness* for God's presence. Christ answers to them all, as it is written, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30). The moment I come to the Saviour, I not only get my need met, the hunger of my soul satisfied, but all that God can give me wrapped up in the person of Christ, and I appropriate it.

The attractiveness of the gospel is this: that God having sent His Son into the world, and Christ having accomplished the work of redemption, the testimony of the Holy Ghost now goes out on every hand: "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Christ is the bread of God that came down from heaven, that a man should eat thereof and not die; but that could not be till He had died, and risen again. But now that He has died, and risen again, you and I are called on to eat and drink, to take that which God provides. In Revelation xxi. the Lord declares, "*I will give* unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely" (ver. 6); and in Revelation xxii. we read, "Whosoever will, *let him take* the water of life freely" (ver. 17). I will give freely, says the Lord; let the thirsty take as freely. There is God's side, and your side. He gives; you have only to take and enjoy. I said to a man the

other night, "I will give you a book." "Will you?" he replied. I gave it to him; and when it was in his hand, he asked me, "When am I to return it?" "Never," I said; "it is yours. If I give you a book, you take it, and it is yours. When God makes you a present of His Son, and His salvation, what have you to do? Simply to take it." He saw the simile, and was helped.

These four lepers were very wise men, I think. They ate and drank, and carried forth gold, and silver, and raiment. They possessed in figure what God gives us in the gospel. Christ Himself is our redemption, our righteousness, and our raiment. Believers have put on Christ. You must stand either in Adam, or in Christ. If you are in Adam, you are on your road to hell; if you are in Christ, you are on your road to glory. Do not forget this, that a Christian is a man who has a title to glory without a flaw, and a prospect before him without a cloud. The title is the blood of Jesus, and the prospect is going to be with Him for ever. What can compare with that? There is nothing in the world like it, and it may be yours now, my friend, if you will in simple faith turn to Christ.

After these lepers have got their own need satisfied, and have become enriched, they begin to think of others: "Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household." They want everybody else to know what they have got for themselves. Sometimes people ask me, Why do you preach the gospel? Well, simply because I cannot

help it. It is a joy to share what fills one's own heart with gladness. The blessing is so great, and so sweet, that, when you have it, you will want everybody else to know it. Conversion is truly contagious: if it gets into a house, it is apt to spread all through it. Each blessed one wants to communicate the blessing to his fellow.

So the lepers wake up the porter, and the porter tells the king's household (vers. 10-12). What is the news? There is plenty of food outside, and nobody to hinder you from getting it. Oh, says the king, in his wisdom, I do not believe that: I will tell you what it is: these Syrians are very crafty: "they know we be hungry," and they have laid a trap for us: they have gone to hide in the field, and when we come out they will catch us alive, and get into the city. God was going to relieve these poor starving Samaritans in the moment of their deepest need, and the king thought the news too good to be true: he could not take it in.

What did the king do? He did what many people are doing to-day: he sent out scouts. He could not believe the good news. And yet there were those four leprous men, with beaming faces, well fed, clothed, and happy, bearing witness to what they had found outside the city. They could each say, I got my hunger appeased, and my thirst quenched; I am rich, and I am satisfied; there is abundance left; and there is not a single soul in the camp to hinder you from getting the same as I have, for God has swept all our foes out of the field. Ah, I do not believe that, says the king; the enemies are still there, they are only hiding. At this juncture one of the king's servants says, Let us take some of those starving horses, and send a couple of scouts to see whether it

be true or not. Happy idea, says the king, we will have the country scoured (vers. 13-15). Away they go all the way to Jordan—some fifty miles. It took them, I suppose, six hours to go, and the same to return, so that they put off their blessing by about twelve hours at any rate.

People now are doing just the same thing. They do not believe God's good news. They do not believe that God is giving salvation without money and without price. But, thank God, there are some who will believe it. Do you believe that God loved you enough to give His own Son for you, and that Christ has died for you? The moment you believe that, God gives you the salvation of your soul.

The scouts go off all the way to Jordan, and the people are waiting anxiously to hear the news. They had heard the truth hours before from the lepers, but they did not receive it; they were not the authorised, recognised heralds; but when these tired-out messengers come back, they just confirm the message of the lepers, and out go the people to find the reality for themselves. "And the people went out, and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the Lord" (ver. 16). This is what souls have said to me often: I have been all my life in darkness, and now when I have come to the Saviour, I find it exactly as it was told; I have been all these years without salvation, and peace, through unbelief.

And now see the doom of the doubting lord. The word of the prophet came true. The king appointed this lord to be over the gate, and the people in their hurry to get to the food trod upon him, so that he

died—died in sight of the relief that had come to the beleaguered city. The fate of the unbeliever is always dreadful. He had said, "Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?" And the servant of God answered solemnly, "Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, *but shalt not eat thereof.*"

Now, my unbelieving friend, dwelling in your cold scepticism, untouched, unregenerate, and saying, I do not believe a man can be saved that way, beware lest this come upon you—to see God's salvation with thine eyes, and yet have no share in it. By-and-by, when the Lord returns, and gathers up His own into glory, then, if still in unbelief, you will know, when it is too late, that the gospel was true, and that the way of salvation was plain, and simple; that it was not to him that worketh, but to him that believeth, that salvation came by the free sovereign grace of God. But, alas, it will be too late: "Thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof." I do not doubt that as the sacks of flour passed by through the gate, this hungry lord said to himself, "I shall have my turn presently." But he did not get his turn: he died under the judgment of God in the very sight of salvation, "for the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died" (ver. 20). Oh, do not you be like him; turn to God, believe in Jesus, and get God's salvation now.

CHAPTER X.

A Night among the Stars.

JUSTIFICATION.

Gen. xv.; Rom. iv.

I READ the fourth chapter of Romans because it is the divine commentary in the New Testament upon this remarkable scene in Abraham's history in the Old. And, further, it lets us know for what purpose God was so careful to record this incident in Abraham's life. It is a most important incident in his life, because it is the moment in which Abraham gets positively linked with God in a double way—(1) By the discovery of what God was in Himself, through what He says to him; and (2) he also discovers the purposes of God concerning himself, as he never did before. Furthermore, he gets an intelligent sense of the ground on which God was going to fulfil the promise that He made to him. Certainly God had made a promise to him before (Gen. xii. 1-3), but the ground whereon it was to be fulfilled he did not know. You will notice presently that God now shows him how that promise is to be fulfilled.

The fourth of Romans tells us that this record of Abraham's having righteousness imputed to him was written not for his sake only, "but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed if we believe on him that raised up

Jesus our Lord from the dead" (ver. 24). There is a great difference between that which Abraham was called on to believe, and that which you and I are called on to believe. Abraham was called on to believe God as to what He would do for him. God said what He would do, and Abraham believed Him. You and I are called on to believe on God, not as to something that He will do, but as regards something which He has done. And you will find that the moment you believe what God has done—the moment you believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead—you get into touch with the God of resurrection, and you will know what peace is as you never knew it before.

Now, there is many a serious person to-day that has not peace with God. They very likely wish they had it, but they have it not. They would like to have the assurance of forgiveness, but they have not got it. They would like to be able to read their title clear to mansions in the sky, but they cannot do it yet; and what is the reason? It is twofold: they have not been brought through grace to believe implicitly, first of all, the Word of God; and secondly, to rest on the work of Christ. Now these two things, in the history of our souls, must be, if there is to be peace, and the happy knowledge of God. You will have to listen to God, and to believe God.

I sometimes hear people say, "I cannot believe the gospel; it is too good to be true." Then you cannot believe God. They reply: "I cannot believe the gospel you preach. It is too good to be true. You tell me I am a sinner in my sins, and yet say I can be saved without doing anything for myself." That is just what God's gospel says. The law told

me the things I ought to do, but which I could not. The law told us what we ought to do, and what we ought to be, and we neither did what it commanded us to do, nor were what we should be. The only effect of the law, therefore, is this—it puts a man in distress. If you understand what the law is—applied spiritually—it will put you into deep distress of conscience, because you get the sense—I am not fit for God. The law says, "Be ye holy," and I am not holy. The law says I must be righteous, and I am not righteous. The law says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself" (Luke x. 27); and I know perfectly well that I have not done thus. There are penalties attached to a broken law, and we are put into deep distress as a consequence.

But what is the gospel? It is the revelation of what God is. The law was the declaration of what you ought to be, and you know perfectly you are not what it says you should be. I know perfectly well I am not. No man is. The law was the revelation of what the creature ought to be, in his walk here on earth, but he is not it. The gospel is the revelation of what God is in the absolute goodness, love, holiness, and righteousness of His nature, made known in the Person of His Son, and through the work of His Son; and the result of its reception is blessed indeed. By the gospel you learn that you are free to enjoy God, to believe Him, to trust Him, to delight in Him. In fact, the company of the Lord is the sweetest thing to your soul, and what brings you to that? The gospel. It shows us what God is in His own nature, and how He has acted in Christ; and, that in

righteousness, He has brought blessing and pardon to us just where, and as we are, sinners in our sins. That is grace, and the knowledge of it is what the gospel brings to us.

This fifteenth chapter of Genesis is very interesting, as showing that there is progress in the soul, for I do not doubt that there is progress in Abraham's soul here. He had heard the call of God before—I quite admit—in the twelfth chapter, and he came out from Ur of the Chaldees. He obeyed the Lord. He was called to go forth, and he did so; but still he never learned what it was to be a justified man before God. Now the gospel not only calls you out of the world to God, and not only forgives you, but it meets you fully as to your state, and you learn by it what it is to be justified before God—that is, that you stand before God as though there could be no possibility of anything being laid to your charge—nay, more, that you are before Him in a state and condition that suits Him—that suits His own heart, and His own nature. That is exactly where the gospel leads us now.

Possibly you may say to me: "How can I, a sinner, stand before God? How can I come in before God in a condition suitable to His heart, and nature, and throne?" There is only one answer. It is this: There is a Man in the presence of God, perfectly suitable to God, and that is the One, who, first of all, went into death, that He might discharge the liability that lay upon you and me, and deliver us from the state in which we were. You see you need justification, and justification in Scripture is connected with a risen Christ—not merely a living Christ, nor a dying Christ, but a *risen* Christ—raised from the dead by the power of God. That is what the fourth

of Romans so beautifully brings out, and no soul has peace until it sees that; nor can it have peace, because you have to learn this, that everything is wrapped up in Christ. When you learn what Christ is, who He is, what He has done, and where He now is, I think your soul will rest in peace with God. You will have the sweet sense that Christ is living for you before God, as He was once for you in death, when He was upon the cross.

Abraham, in the night scene now coming before us, learned what justification was, and it is very beautiful to notice how he learned it. He had been exposed to a great temptation in the previous chapter. The king of Sodom—a man of the world—had offered to patronise him; and very few of us, let me tell you, are above being patronised by the world. It is only the man of faith that will refuse to be patronised by the king, for the king wanted to make him rich. But Abraham says: "I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich" (xiv. 22, 23). He would not even take a string. What a nice state he is in! He has done with the world. He will get on. If you break with the world, my friend, you will get on.

What is the result of this refusal of reward from the world? Let us see. "After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abraham in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: *I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward*" (xv. 1). What a lovely word to encourage a man! The Lord draws near to you. You have had a great temptation, and you have re-

sisted it. You receive a blessing. Do you know that? You have met some temptation—for the devil always strews the path with temptations: all along the road he drops them, and sets traps for you—and you have been able to say, No! You will find that the Lord will give you a blessing. He says here, "Fear not, Abram." Beautiful words! Are you troubled? Fear not! Are you anxious? Fear not! Are you in distress of soul? God says, "Fear not."

These two lovely words you will find strewed like diamonds throughout the pages of inspiration. You cannot go far through God's Book without finding the Lord drawing near to some trembling, timid soul, with these words, "Fear not!" You and I were afraid of God once; we shunned Him—we feared Him. I do not mean in the right sense. We shunned Him, and got as far away from Him as we possibly could, but He comes near and says, "Fear not: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Did Abraham lose anything by saying "No" to the king of the world? Not he. "I am thy shield," says God, and if you get God as your shield, the devil can throw as many of his darts as he likes, but they will have no effect. My friend, if you have God for the shield of your soul, you are very safe.

Elsewhere we are told to "take the shield of faith"; but that is not the thought here. If you have moral courage enough to say "No" to the world, God says, I will put myself between you and what is antagonistic to you; I am thy shield, and more—I am "thy exceeding great reward." If God be your shield, you are protected. If He be your reward, you are well off. Abraham refused the world, and what did he get instead? The Lord for his portion.

People sometimes think it would be a sorrowful thing to give up the world. Abraham may teach you differently. He got far more than he gave up. Young people usually think it would be a great mistake to give up the world. Abraham would not take as much as a shoe-latchet from it, and he was an immense gainer thereby. He had done with the world. It could not satisfy him; and it can never satisfy you.

The moment he has taken this decided step of "refusing," and "choosing" (see Heb. xi. 24, 25), God says to him, "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Now see how Abraham advances. He catches the mind of the Lord immediately. He is going to bless me, he thinks, and he says to the Lord, "Lord God, what wilt thou give me?" He takes his right place. God had drawn near to him, in the richness of grace, and Abraham takes his right place before God—in the fulness of need and faith. "Lord God, what wilt thou *give* me?" is always the language of faith. Some of us thought we had need of something to bring to God. There are some in this room who have thought till this hour that they must bring something to God in order to get God's blessing, and secure salvation, and the knowledge of life and peace. They have been struggling for long to bring Him something, and have never managed it. Do what Abraham did. He is "the father of all them that believe" (Rom. iv. 11). He is the leader of the host of the saved. He is the first man whose conversion is related in Scripture. He is a typical man—a representative man as regards conversion. You had better do what he did. What was that? When the Lord drew near to him in grace, and goodness, and with purposes of blessing in His

heart, he took the place of being ready for blessing and said, "Lord God, what wilt thou give me?" He takes his right place.

Are you willing to be blessed by God, or do you think that you must bring something to the Lord? Are you to be a receiver, or a giver? Do as Abraham did. Now note the next step here. "And, behold, *the word of the Lord came unto him.*" Observe that. I press that greatly. It is listening to God. You will never get clear in your soul till you listen to God, and God only, and hear what He says. "And the word of the Lord came to him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir" (ver. 4). God promised him an heir. He was to have a son. He had heard about him before. The son had been intimated in days gone by (Gen. xii. 2, 3), but now he gets the divine assurance that the son shall come. God takes him outside, and directs him to look toward heaven. It is again a night scene and one of the most interesting. The shades of evening had fallen, the earth was quiet, so to speak, when the Lord brings this man forth, who had great desires in his heart for a son and heir, and he hears from the Lord that he is to have a son. He knew he was an old man, and that his body was "now dead, when he was about an hundred years old" (Rom. iv. 14), and that his wife, Sarah, was only ten years his junior. It must have struck him with great force, when God led him forth and said, "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be" (ver. 5).

Picture the darkness of that Eastern night, relieved by the brightness and clearness of light shed by

those millions of silvery, twinkling worlds overhead. Abraham looks north, south, east, and west, and with amazement scans the glittering firmament as God says, "Tell the stars, if thou be able to number them." Of course he could not number them. Who could? Obeying his orders, he looks, and the next thing he hears is, "So shall thy seed be." That was a stupendous statement. And what do I read now? "*And he believed in the Lord;* and he counted it to him for righteousness" (ver. 6). It says in the fourth of Romans, regarding this circumstance, that "Abraham *believed* God" (ver. 3). In the historical account we find Abraham "believed *in* the LORD." In the same chapter of the Romans we read that we shall be justified if we believe "*on* him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead" (ver. 25). Is there a difference? Yes. You believe God, you believe *in* Him, and you believe *on* Him. All three are found in Scripture, and you say, What is the difference? When I believe God, I believe what He says, *i.e.*, His word. If I believe *in* Him, I believe what He is in Himself; I trust Him; I can rely on Him. If I believe *on* Him, I believe what He does. That is very simple.

God is to be believed. I hear people say sometimes, I cannot believe. It is not a question what you believe, but whom you believe. The point is, Can you believe God? Alas! when God speaks to you about His blessed Son, and says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," you cannot believe Him. When God tells you "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," you say, I do not think He could mean me. Is it not strange? You can believe anybody but God. Are you convicted of the gravity of your unbelief? I hope so.

Now, "Abraham *believed* God." May you do so too. If you have been convicted of unbelief in days gone by, may your heart from this hour be able to say, I will be like Abraham.

God said to him, "So shall thy seed be," and "he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." Now what was that? Abraham had no righteousness of his own. Neither have you nor I, and if you think you have anything to fit you for the presence of God, it is an immense mistake. Did you never read the scripture, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away"? (Isa. lxiv. 6.) There is not one who would come here, let alone come to God, in filthy rags. I have heard many poor men say they could not go to a gospel meeting because their clothes were not fit. That was an excuse, but not a good one. But observe that it is our righteousnesses, not our sins, which are as filthy rags. That is what God labels them. Your nicest thoughts, sweetest ways, best actions, aye, the very finest you ever did, are as "filthy rags." If you think they will clothe you before God, sin is attached to all of them.

If a command comes to you to appear before her Majesty Queen Victoria, you know you must obey, and the first thing you say is, I must get a Court dress; I must have a dress that suits the presence of the one into whose august audience I am called. There is a regulation as to what the dress must be, and you would of necessity pay heed to it. Friend, God wants you in His presence. He wants to have you for ever and ever. Mark this, if you are to be there, you must have a dress that will suit Him.

Your righteousness will not do, for it is written, "There is none righteous, no, not one." Again: "There is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom. iii. 10, 12). Then you may turn to me, and say, If that be the case, are all men lost? Yes, all men are lost. Every man is lost till Christ saves him.

But, I hear you saying, surely every man should do good deeds. Good deeds! My dear friend, the Holy Ghost says, "There is *none* that doeth good." You may be moral, benevolent, and charitable, all of which is very well among men, but when you have to do with God you must have a nature, a life, and a righteousness which suit God. There has only been one Man in this world whose heart, and life, and ways have been suitable to God, and that is the One who now sits on His throne to-night, the Lord Jesus, blessed be His name. Before He went yonder, to adorn that throne as the ascended Man in glory, He went into death, that He might atone for the sin of the man who could not put away his own sin. He went into death, in infinite grace, and God in righteousness has taken Him out of death and put Him yonder, where He becomes the righteousness of every one who believes in Him.

How did Abraham become righteous? By faith. How can you become righteous? By faith. Did Abraham acquire righteousness by works? Listen to these words in the fourth of Romans: "For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." He had no righteousness. What God said he believed. He took God at His word. He gave God credit for doing as He said He would,

and as a result God said, You are a righteous man, Abraham. And is that the way you and I are justified? In principle exactly so. We are "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. iii. 24). Listen: "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. iii. 20). What does the law give? The knowledge of sin. What does grace give? Justification through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. From the law there comes a sentence of condemnation. What the gospel gives you is a present and eternal salvation. I prefer the gospel. Do you cling to the law still? You will rue it. Listen again: "What things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Rom. iii. 19). Has your mouth been stopped yet? You surely cannot talk about what you do, and what you are. If "all the world" is "become guilty before God," you are guilty. Perhaps you have never yet pleaded "guilty." You will have to after a while. I pleaded guilty long ago, and God has justified me.

But probably you will say, Must I not do something towards salvation? Well, do you think you ought to do something? Listen: "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." If you work, it is not grace to get payment for your work. If I work for a man, I do not think it any grace that he should pay me for it. If the one for whom you usually work knows that you need money, and sends it to you, though, through illness or accident, you do no work for it, that is grace. Carefully note the principle of the passage: "Now to him

that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. iv. 4, 5). Thank God, Abraham and I stand upon the same ground. Abraham! how did you get justified? God told me what He was going to do, and I believed Him. And you might say to me, How did you get justified? By faith, just the same as Abraham. God told me what He had done; that His Son had gone into death for my sins, and that He had raised Him from the dead, and I believed Him. We are justified by faith.

Every believer is on the same ground before God. Notice that, for it has ever been true that "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." In proof of that, the scripture before us turns us to David's history: "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (vers. 6-8). The gospel goes further than merely giving pardon, for it says that the Lord will not impute sin to you—that is, He will not reckon sin against those who have believed. He might forgive you, and you might not have the sense of being justified before God. But when you learn that through faith in Jesus, and by virtue of association with Him, you now stand before God in Him, and as He is, at the right hand of God, you occupy new ground altogether. You learn that righteousness is imputed to you if you believe on Him that raised up Jesus from the dead, and, therefore, being justified

by faith, you have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The gospel for us is exactly on the same lines as it came to Abraham in this starry night scene. He takes God at His word. The Lord imputes his faith to him for righteousness, of which he had none in himself. He stands reckoned as a righteous man because of his faith in God. He rests upon what God was about to do, we on what He has done; but the principle of our justification is exactly the same.

Justification is presented in three ways in the Epistle to the Romans. In the third chapter we get the complete ruin of man detailed, and then the statement, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (ver. 23). That is our condition by nature. Then we are told that we are "*justified freely by his grace* (God's grace) through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (ver. 24). In the first verse of the fifth chapter of Romans we read—"Therefore being *justified by faith*, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." In the ninth verse of the same chapter we have—"Much more then being now *justified by his blood*, we shall be saved from wrath through him." So you see justification spoken of in these three ways. Are there then three ways of justification? No. There are three parties to justification. Do you know who they are? God, Christ, and yourself. And what is God's part in it? Listen: "Being justified freely by *his grace* through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Grace is the spring of it all. It all comes from God. And what is the next thing? "Being now *justified by his blood*"—the blood of Jesus—"we shall be saved from wrath through him." That is Christ's side—"his blood"—His death. And what

is your side and mine? It is faith. Righteousness shall be imputed to us "if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being *justified by faith*, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (iv. 24, 25, v. 1). What is your side and mine? Faith! God's side is *Grace.* That is the spring. It all flows from Him. And Jesus' side? *Blood.* His death is the instrumental means and basis—the groundwork of our justification. Your side and mine is *Faith!* And what is that? It is the hand put out to take the blessing which God's grace offers, and Jesus' blood secures. Justification, therefore, is *by* grace, *through* blood, and *on the principle* of faith—not works.

But there is more instruction in the scene before us as to the basis of the soul's blessing. The Lord says to Abraham, "I am the LORD, that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it" (ver. 7). To this Abraham replies, "*Whereby* shall I know that I shall inherit it?" (ver. 8.) What evidence can I have that I shall inherit the land, is the thought of his heart. The Lord says to him, "Take *me*"—He does not say "Take *thee*"—"an heifer of three years old, and a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon" (ver. 9). Why these five animals? Would not one have been sufficient for God? I believe one would have been enough for God, but the five were needed for Abraham, and for us as learners of his lesson. I believe the truth brought out here is to show us that God's way of blessing is always based on death. Sacrifice is the instrumental means whereby

you and I can be justified, and whereby God has been glorified in respect of sin.

Only death can put away sin. Death came by sin —the sin of the first man—and sin can only be put away by death—the death of the last Adam. There must be sacrifice. The groundwork of our blessing is the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore God bids Abraham take these victims. But you might say, Why the five? Five is always the number in Scripture that is coupled with weakness The weakness of man, and the weakness of the soul. There are five people in this room to-night, and all five rest on Jesus, but have different measures of apprehension and enjoyment. Do you think that each one is as happy as the other? I never knew two people to be equally happy. I find some happy, and others happier still. We certainly ought to enjoy Christ, but our enjoyment will depend on our appreciation of Him; and that is the point here, I take it.

Now, observe these five animals were of different relative values. There was the heifer, the she-goat, the ram, the turtle-dove, and the pigeon. The heifer was much more valuable than the she-goat; but the turtle-dove, and the pigeon, what were they in value as compared with the heifer. Each victim presents Christ in death, but Christ differently apprehended; Christ, not as God estimates Him, but as you and I estimate Him. There may be five souls in this hall to-night, I repeat, resting on the work of Jesus, and but one having a clear, full grasp of Christ. You will find that person brimful of "joy and peace in believing" with sweet and precious views of Christ, and deep enjoyment of Christ. I come to the one who was only converted last night perhaps, and I find that he

has but a very feeble sense of the value of the work of Jesus. One sees the heifer, the other the pigeon, so to say.

Now tell me, Are the souls who are most advanced more truly and certainly saved than those who know little about Christ? Not a bit of it! The most advanced is not a bit more safe than the one who is only just beginning his journey. He may be happier, but he is not safer. Friend, if you to-night can say, I really believe on, and rest in Jesus, then you are saved. If you have found Christ, and have rested your guilty soul on Him, and His wondrous work—even if you know very little about Him—you are as safe as the most advanced Christian. The man of a day's knowledge of the Lord is as safe as the man with fifty years' experience. They have both found the same Saviour. Ah! but, you say, I do not appreciate Christ as I should. True, but God appreciates Him at His true value, that is the point, and He accepts you on His estimate of Christ, not yours. I value the Lord Jesus greatly, but God values Him infinitely more. Our value of Him does not regulate our acceptance, though it may, and does affect our joy. It is God's estimate of the work of Christ in which the believer is set before Him, and according to which he is accepted and blessed.

Two things have to be borne in mind. It is *the word of God* that connects your soul with the Lord, and it is *the work of Christ* by which you are redeemed, and brought to God. Abraham knew he should inherit the land on the ground of sacrifice. This is exactly in principle what the fourth of Romans gives us as the ground of our knowledge of justification. Jesus has been among the dead, and God has

raised Him up from among the dead. He "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." All the offences were borne by Him, blotted out, and washed away in His precious blood. On the ground of that finished work of His, we are forgiven and justified by God. We stand in all the credit and value of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ—not as we appreciate it, but as God appreciates it.

Our appreciation of Christ must ever be feeble, because we are finite. God's appreciation of His work is infinite, and we stand in His own infinite appreciation of the work by which He has been glorified. We stand accepted before God according to His own estimate of the work of His beloved Son. He has "made us accepted in the beloved" (Eph. i. 6). He was delivered for our offences—therefore we are delivered from them. He was raised again for our justification—therefore we are justified, and He becomes our righteousness.

A very blessed consequence becomes, therefore, our present possession. "Being justified by faith, *we have peace* with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1). This is peace with regard to all the past—peace with regard to sin. But there is more than that, for it is added, "By whom also we have access by faith into this *grace wherein we stand*, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (ver. 2). If I look back, I have *peace;* if I look up, *grace;* and if I look to the future, *glory*. That is a fine canopy to be under. There are three segments in the arc of the Christian's firmament. These are the three: Peace, as regards the past; Grace, for the present; and Glory, for the future. No judgment? Nay. No condemna-

tion? Nay. You are justified by faith in Jesus and His work, and God will never bring the work of His Son into judgment; for, mark it well, it is by the work of His Son, and by that alone, that you are justified.

It is important to see that not only has the believer justification from all offences, but also that he has "justification of life" (Rom. v. 18). We are possessors now of eternal life in the Lord Jesus Christ. We have life on the other side of death. I think many a person has learned justification from offences, who has not learned that he possesses justification of life. I live before God in the life of my Saviour. That is where we have peace, rest, joy, and delight in the presence of our Lord.

God give you, my friend, this rest; and if, as in our picture, the fowls come down upon the sacrifice, do as Abraham did—"He drove them away." And what are the fowls? They are the doubts and the suggestions of the devil—the doubts of the day. "And when the fowls came down upon the carcases, Abram drove them away." My friend, let nothing come in to intercept the view of your soul of that precious work which the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross. Drive these fowls away; they are the doubts—the fears—the uncertainties, which spring up in the heart of the believer if he is not careful. If you are beset by them, merely do as Abraham did. "Resist the devil," says Scripture, "and he will flee from you." What do you mean by the fowls? you ask. They are the devil really. That is the figure under which he is presented in the thirteenth of Matthew, where the Lord speaks of the birds of the air picking up the seeds by the wayside. That is how the Lord

expresses the fact that the devil takes away the word of God out of the heart, lest the sinner "should believe and be saved." Every evil thought suggested, and every doubt of any kind as regards Christ and the value of His work, is of the devil. Abraham drove the fowls away. You and I must do the same, and "resist the devil."

God give you rest, and joy, in His Son, and the knowledge of what it is to be justified by Him from all offences, and that you are the possessor of "justification of life."

Thy works, not mine, O Christ,
Speak gladness to this heart;
They tell me all is done,
They bid my fear depart.

To whom save Thee,
Who can alone
For sin atone,
Lord, shall I flee?

Thy pains, not mine, O Christ,
Upon the shameful tree
Have paid redemption's price
And purchased peace for me.

Thy wounds, not mine, O Christ,
Can heal my bruisèd soul;
Thy stripes, not mine, contain
The balm that makes me whole.

Thy cross, not mine, O Christ,
Has borne the awful load
Of sins, that none in heaven
Or earth, could bear but God.

Thy death, not mine, O Christ,
Has paid the ransom due;
Ten thousand deaths like mine
Would have been all too few.

CHAPTER XI.

A Night in Sodom.

PROCRASTINATION.

Gen. xix. ; Luke xvii. 26-37.

IN a letter I received this week from a Christian friend, occurs this statement: "The world is ripe for judgment; is the Church ripe for rapture?" Now the first statement is absolutely true. The world is ripe for judgment, and it is coming. The nineteenth chapter of the Book of Genesis describes a scene that was ripe for judgment. In the previous chapter many of you will recollect how Abraham, the friend of God, in actual communion with the Lord, was making intercession for Sodom. Why? He knew that judgment was coming on Sodom.

God had revealed His mind to Abraham. In the seventeenth verse of chap. xviii. we read: "The Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" and so He says to him in verse 20: "Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know. And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom; but

Abraham stood yet before the Lord." In a moment Abraham had the sense—That is a doomed place. I must get my nephew Lot out of it. He had relations there. If you have any Christian relations, dear unsaved sinner, do not be amazed if those Christian friends become intensely importunate with you about the salvation of your soul. Why? Just because, as Abraham knew in his day that Sodom was doomed, and that the judgment of the Lord was about to fall on that unutterably godless place, so now, we Christians know that the very next thing for the world is judgment. Mark that!

The next thing for this poor world is God's judgment. Our Lord has told us in the few verses I read just now from the seventeenth of Luke, that exactly "as it was in the days of Lot . . . even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed." Without the slightest warning judgment will fall on a Christless Christendom, just as judgment fell on a godless Sodom. Happy the man that is outside of it! Wretched the man that belongs to it! Happy is the man that is clear of it—the man that has got to the mountain top—the spot of safety. You say, What is the mountain top? It is Christ. It is the knowledge of Christ. The mountain top was God's appointed place of safety from the storm that was about to roll over that doomed city, and engulf every person that was within its precincts.

Mark how importunate Abraham is in regard to Lot and Sodom. Would to God that we Christians were half as importunate! Would to God that we believers in the Lord Jesus Christ were as really in earnest about the blessing and deliverance of the unsaved souls all around us as Abraham was for those

in Sodom! You have only to read that eighteenth chapter to see how earnestly he pleads with the Lord. "Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?" (xviii. 24.) The Lord replies that if fifty righteous be forthcoming, the city shall be saved. And if there be only forty, Lord? Yes! And if there be only thirty? Yes! And if there be only twenty? Yes! And if there be only ten, Lord? Yes! And then he ceases. All the while he was thinking of Lot; and the thought in his heart was—I believe that Lot is a righteous man, though in a wrong position, and there are sure to be a few more like him to make up the necessary ten.

But the only man in all the city that God calls righteous is that man Lot. God, however, understands the deep desire of Abraham's heart, and in the chapter which I have read this evening responds to it. Abraham wants Lot delivered, and God effects it, for we read: "And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered——" Whom? Lot? No. He interpreted the prayer of Abraham's heart for Lot, and He "remembered Abraham, and *sent Lot* out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt" (xix. 29).

Nothing can be more blessed than the position of the Christian now, who is importunate with God for precious souls in a doomed scene. In the goodness and grace of His heart, even though there were not the number, that Abraham fondly hoped, in that scene, God rejoiced to answer the desire of Abraham's heart, and brought deliverance to Lot.

It is not the question to-night of how few there be

saved, or how many there be saved, but this—Judgment is about to fall upon this godless scene; but before it falls a message is sent by God to you to get you morally out of it. Before the judgment fell upon Sodom heavenly messengers entered its precincts, and though they had much difficulty, they got Lot and his family outside. Ah! what a picture of the difficulty that we have to get sinners persuaded now to flee to Jesus from the wrath to come.

There may be a young man in this hall to-night, who has eluded the gospel, from the first hour of his birth to this very moment. He has eluded it—escaped it, and has thought himself uncommonly clever in turning aside the keen edge of the Word of God, from the preacher's lips, or the importunate fervent entreaty of some loving, tender-hearted relation. He has escaped from the gospel as though it were the plague. Are you this young man? God is giving you, my friend, another, possibly your last, chance of salvation. Procrastinate no longer, I implore you. Trifle with the goodness of the Lord no longer, I beseech you; and if you hear of God's way of escape, the Lord help you to tread it.

Remember the scene you are in is doomed. God has "appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts xvii. 31). Lay hold of this fact that the day of judgment is coming—not the moment of the great white throne—but the day when the Son of Man will deal with this godless scene. The day is appointed, and the One who is to execute judgment is ordained. God has fixed the day. It is appointed. You may

have broken many appointments in your day, friend, but you will not break God's appointment in that day. God has appointed the day, and He will make the world, so to speak, keep the appointment. You had better let His grace save you now.

What is the history of this world? It has broken God's law, murdered God's Son, resisted God's Spirit, despised God's gospel, and is now busy frittering away God's Word. There is nothing left now for the world but judgment, and that certainly will come, in a moment when it looks not for it. Do I hear you say, What then shall I do? Come out of it in spirit. Break with it. Get outside it. That is what the gospel does for a man. It brings him outside of it.

But you may turn to me, and say, I find many a Christian pretty much in the world. I know you do; and I doubt not Lot illustrates that kind of Christian. Lot was a man who undoubtedly possessed faith. He is called in the New Testament "just Lot." I have no doubt he was a man who, when in his uncle's company, had heard a good deal about the things of the Lord. He was, however, worldly-hearted. In the thirteenth chapter we find Lot accompanying Abraham out of Egypt, where I have no doubt the former had learned a good many bad ways, for "evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. xv. 33), and a man is always impressed by the *lowest*, not the *highest* company he keeps. When they came out of Egypt there was a little contention between their respective herdsmen, and the result was that Abraham walking in the spirit of grace, said to Lot, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee . . . If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I

will go the left" (xiii. 8, 9). Abraham's yieldingness is known to all men. "So Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan that it was well watered everywhere," and beautifully nourished "even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar" (ver. 10). The city of Sodom was a little distance off, and thither he gradually gravitated as "he pitched his tent toward Sodom" (ver. 12).

That is in the thirteenth chapter. The next thing you read concerning Lot is in the fourteenth chapter —where you find he has got into the city; and is actually taken prisoner along with the Sodomites, by Chedorlaomer and his allies, but is delivered by the intervention of Abraham. You would think that, after that experience he would surely have learned such a lesson, and so profited by the shaking he got, that he would not go back to that place, either he or his family. That is not so. He had not learned his lesson, so when you come to this nineteenth chapter, that is before us, you find he has settled down quietly in the town, and become a magistrate. Well, you say, Is there anything wrong in a man being a magistrate? I am not saying that. I am thankful for every man who wields the civil power, who is a God-fearing person; but do you not see that what Lot wanted was a position in the world, though doubtless his desire at the same time was to improve the world, and to whitewash Sodom—which God had described as "wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly," in fact unmendably bad, and only ripe for judgment.

Now see what took place. Lot was anxious, and "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to

day with their unlawful deeds" (2 Pet. ii. 7, 8). The fact was he was a converted man in the wrong place. He ought to have been entirely separate from it. He gradually got from the plain into the city, and eventually they made him a magistrate. Doubtless he thought that when he was a magistrate, he would do great things; but what was the result? Did he put the world right? No. And do you think the gospel puts the world right? No, nothing will put the world right but judgment. "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isa. xxvi. 9). You say, That is a terribly poor prospect for the world. Yes, you are right. The world is rushing on to judgment; but meantime the gospel comes and carries souls out of it, delivering them from the scene through which they have to pass.

The reception of the gospel has present as well as eternal effects for good. Of those who receive it, we read, that they have "escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Pet. i. 4). That is what Lot's history does not illustrate. Lot and his family got thoroughly into the world, and were tainted with the moral corruption that lust produced. Long breathing a morally polluted atmosphere deadened conscience, and begot evil and unheard-of ways (see Gen. xix. 30-38). That is the lesson I learn from Lot and his children.

Let us now look at the way in which he gets at length delivered out of Sodom. The Lord Jesus bids you and me look at and learn from this scene, otherwise He would not have said so emphatically: "As it was in the days of Lot . . . thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed;" and, lest there should be among His followers any lingering in sin

or procrastinating, He adds that sharp, short, trite sentence, that I would to God were burned deeply into the conscience of every lingerer here to-night—"*Remember Lot's wife!*" She was a person who was almost saved, but was not. She was within sight of the place of safety, but failed to reach it. She was on the verge of getting divinely appointed security, but missed it. Two things worked in her heart to her ruin. Unbelief and disobedience. She did not in her heart believe that God would judge Sodom, and spite of His plain command to the contrary, she would look back, and in that moment she was cut off, and she stands an everlasting beacon of the awful folly of disobeying the Lord.

Ah! my unconverted, world-loving friend, you think you can have your own way. You can; I admit it; but you will repent it for eternity, unless God bring you to deep repentance here. Lot's wife may well warn you. She stands an everlasting beacon, I repeat, to this world of the insensate folly of a soul that might have been saved, but was not, through unbelief and disobedience. Therefore our Lord cries, with the most emphatic language possible—"Remember Lot's wife!" God help you to remember Lot's wife; for if you do not receive Jesus as your blessed Saviour now, you may never have another opportunity; and you will repent in eternity the awful folly of not simply obeying the gospel.

Let us turn to our chapter now, and see how God answers Abraham's prayer. Two angels go to Sodom in the evening. The sun is setting. The shades of night are falling on that city of corruption and lust, as these two messengers, freighted with the thoughts of God, and tidings of deliverance for souls in that

doomed city, enter it. I know a man here to-night who has a similar message; and just as these men spoke in Sodom, so I tell you to-night, my friends, that judgment is about to fall; but you yet have time to escape it. You may have salvation just now. I stand here this evening to tell you of the wonderful way of escape that God is pointing out to sinners, through the death and resurrection of His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

These two angels—I call them heavenly evangelists, because indeed they were such—enter the city. Lot sees them, and accosts them. He feels that there is something about them to which his heart responds. He wants them to go into his house. But no, they are chary about that. They say, "Nay, but we will abide in the street all night" (ver. 2). They would not enter Lot's house. You say, Why not? I think the reason is very simple. They did not think Lot's house was of good repute. The manners of his house were such that the two messengers felt that they would rather stay outside than enter it. Christians, what a lesson for you and me. What is the atmosphere of your house and mine? Is the atmosphere of your house and mine such that God would like to come into them? Is your house one where Jesus is always to be found, and His disciples always welcome? These servants of God felt that Lot's house had not a good savour about it, and they proposed to stay outside.

However, at length, Lot constrains them, and they come in; and no sooner are they inside than the men of the city gather round about, and the true character of the iniquity and godlessness of the place is made manifest. The crowd demands that the strangers be

brought out. Lot expostulates with them. He pleads with them. He is even ready to abase his own children to cover and protect these strangers. At length the riot gets so bad that they say to him, "Stand back." Their anger is aroused, and they cry, "This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge." What moral power has he over them when their passions and lusts are roused? None, and they plainly tell him, "Now will we deal worse with thee than with them." They would have broken in the door; but at that moment the door is opened, and the men draw Lot within.

The next thing we find is that those outside are struck with blindness. Now, mark you, God is striking Christendom with blindness in the very hour I speak—with moral blindness, spiritual blindness. We are drifting with lightning rapidity to the moment of which the second chapter of 2nd Thessalonians speaks, when it says that—"Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved . . . for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (vers. 10-12).

I quite admit that the full application of that scripture will be consequent on the day when the Lord Jesus has come for His people, and when the Church, then completed, has been taken away, and every Christian has been removed out of the scene. Then will judicial blindness fall upon those who have rejected the light, as well as grace and privilege. But although the moment of the full application of the scripture has not yet come, every man, that looks abroad to-day, and sees what is going on, cannot but

be struck with the amount of what I call moral blindness that is passing over Christendom, and more than in any other place under the sun,—the land you and I live in—the British Isles, so favoured of God with His Word.

The Bible is being slowly but surely torn to pieces, and committed to limbo. The very men who should have been the conservators of the Scriptures—the professors, the up to date, but, alas! unconverted professors of theology—have stripped it page by page, and book by book, until, were we to believe these learned infidels, there would not be seven pages of it left for faith to lay hold of, or for the soul to feed upon. Moses, a myth! Isaiah, a fool! Daniel, an impostor! and John not to be believed in! The pseudo-friends of the Bible have been so impregnated with scientific infidelity—with what God calls "profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called" (1 Tim. vi. 20)—that their evolutionary theories—in the very face of Scripture—lead ordinary newspaper critics to say, "If Professor ——'s arguments are sound, the Bible of the future will be a good handbook of biology, and common-sense will take the place of the Holy Ghost." What a scathing rebuke to a professed friend of the Lord Jesus!

And this in the end of the nineteenth century of grace! God is striking this land with blindness, you may be certain. Thank God for the men that hold on to, and proclaim His Word simply. They have the light anyway. Have you not got that light? May God give it to you. What I have been alluding to is really the world—the natural man—tinkering the Word of God; but it has no capacity whatever to grasp its contents. It is only by the Holy Ghost

that Scripture is rightly to be understood. The natural man understands not the things of the Spirit of God, and that is the lesson which one learns from Sodom in Lot's day. The world is left to its blindness; and the next thing is that judgment falls.

We are not told whether the blindness was removed from the eyes of these people, but this we are told, that they groped to find the door, but could not. And now these evangelists address the people for whom they came. And I, too, turn from those who oppose the Lord, and address any who are wanting salvation, and who, when they hear that judgment is coming, are anxious to escape it. The angels say to Lot, in verse 12: "Hast thou here any besides? son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring *them* out of this place: for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it" (vers. 12, 13). They have a double commission. They are sent by the Lord to intimate the fact of coming judgment; but, ere the judgment falls, they desire to deliver and bring out, not only Lot himself, but any in whom his heart is interested. How touching are these words—"Hast thou here any besides?"

Christian! have you no unconverted sons? Have you no unconverted daughters? Have you no unconverted loved ones? Hear God's solemn query and command of grace: "Hast thou here any besides? son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring *them* out of this place."

God warns; faith hears, and acts accordingly. So

we read: "And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons-in-law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city" (ver. 14). His soul is roused, and he goes forth. He is awakened to solemn realities, and is in earnest. If we have not hitherto been in earnest, may God waken us up. Dear Christian friends, what we want is earnestness! I feel how I want it. I long for it. Oh! that we were all truly awakened to the gravity of the situation around us. What ought to mark every one of us is a sense of the value and the danger of immortal souls, and the urgent necessity of impressing every one of them with the fact that judgment is coming, and that there is a way—and one way only—to escape from it. Are you and I wanting our relations, our friends, our neighbours, to be saved?

There seems to have been a *carte blanche* given to Lot. "Hast thou here *any* besides?" He had two daughters in the house, but the angels say, Have you any others in whom you are interested? Go and tell them! He is roused, goes out, and speaks to his sons-in-law. I think I see that scene. It was night, for we are told the morning had not yet come. No, the morning of the day had not come. The morning does not break till the fifteenth verse. It was thus in the dead of night. I think I see Lot. He leaves his house and goes down to the house of his son-in-law. He hammers at the door. He knocks so loudly that every sleeper in the house is wakened. May God wake up every sleeping soul in this hall to-night! Would to God I could waken you, and rouse your godless soul! Lot awoke those he went to. I have no doubt they wondered. "Who knocks?" "I."

"You, father-in-law—what is it?" He replies, "Up, get you out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city." What a message! And, coming too, from the man, who had been going to put the city right. "Up, get you out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city," falls on the ears of the suddenly roused ones.

And what now? Does the message produce much effect, when the father-in-law gives it. Now, listen; so much for worldliness; so much for tampering with the world; so much for our hearts being enamoured of the things, and getting engaged with the favours of the world. The men of the world read our lives, and know perfectly well whether we *live* in the world, and love its things, or not. Lot's family read his life, and here is their comment. Do the sons-in-law mock Lot. Oh, dear, no! They have too much reverence for that. They do not mock him. They listen to his words, hear all he had to say, and draw their conclusion. What is it? "He seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law" (ver. 14).

I think they said to one another: What has happened? What has come over him? Has he lost his reason? The man that has come into the city to live, and has got into a position in the municipal government thereof, has given us his daughters in marriage, now in the dead of night comes and tells us that the Lord is going to destroy this place. What absurdity is this? Truly he seemed to them as one that mocked. They thought he was mad, or was playing the fool for a purpose. They did not mock, but judged he was doing so. They declined to believe him, because this message was so totally different from, and out of keeping with all his previous pathway.

That is the point. They could not reconcile the two things. They could not reconcile this startling message, given in the dead of night, with the fact that he had voluntarily come to, and lived in the city, loved its society, its company and its pleasures, and though pained by its sins, nevertheless chose—after being taken once out of it—to remain as a citizen in it. They could not understand this. "He seemed as one that mocked."

What was the effect of Lot's exhortation? I do not believe there was any effect. I think his sons-in-law went back to their beds, to continue the slumber, out of which they were so unexpectedly roused to hear of coming judgment of which they were incredulous, because of the bygone ways of the herald. Lot completely failed in his mission. It is of no use for us to proclaim "judgment to come" to our neighbours, if it be patent and manifest that our hearts are engrossed with the world's things. There is no use in our speaking of the future, if it be plain that we are only living for the present. The effect of such inconsistency must be to rob our testimony for God of all power. Oh! what a lesson to learn in Sodom! May we each heed it.

Lot having failed in his mission, returned to his house. Unbelief destroyed his relations, and procrastination almost destroyed him. This is evident. Manifestly he lingered, and would have stayed yet awhile in Sodom, but we read: "When the morning arose, then the angels *hastened* Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; *lest thou be consumed* in the iniquity of the city" (ver. 15). Lot's outside testimony had absolutely failed, and inside the house it was not much better, but his wife and his

two daughters evidently are impressed by the testimony of the two strangers. As far as Lot's influence outside was concerned, it had not the weight of a feather. Not one solitary soul in all Sodom believed him, and, I repeat, there is to me in this a most pregnant lesson.

Mercy always rejoices against judgment, and this scene is no exception to this principle. "Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest *thou* be consumed in the iniquity of the city," was Mercy's voice to Lot. She, so to speak, says to Lot: "You cannot now impress other people. You have had your chance, and you have missed it. You might have been God's witness in Sodom. You have failed in this, and lost your opportunity. Now, ere judgment falls on it, escape yourself." And what does he do? He lingers. He procrastinates. He starts, if I may so say, the sad history of the race of procrastinators of whom you read so much in Scripture, and see so many around you.

Lingerer, you have often thought of coming to the Lord; but you have procrastinated. Young man, son of Christian parents, you know perfectly well the deep desire of their hearts for your salvation, and you have felt that you ought to come to the Saviour, yet you linger. Lingerer, procrastinator, you know full well that your only safety and wisdom lie in coming to the Saviour, and you mean to do it some day, but still you linger. What folly is yours. More souls are eternally lost through procrastination in coming to Christ, than by open, glaring sin.

But, to follow our story, we read: "While he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters;

the Lord being merciful unto him; and they brought him forth, and set him without the city" (ver. 16). Oh, what grace! It is just like God's grace to take a lingerer by the hand. Give me your hand to-night, friend, that I may lead you to Jesus. Let me lead you to the Saviour! Will you not do it? I wish you would do what a woman did once in this very hall. While speaking, I had said, "Oh, give me your hand, and let me lead you to Jesus." As the meeting separated, I met her. Tears ran down her cheeks, as I asked, "Are you decided?" "Thank God, I am," she said. "And when did you come to Jesus?" "To-night while you were speaking. When you put out your hand and said, 'Give me your hand,' I put out mine, and I came to the Lord on the spot, and He saved me then and there!" Now, that is just what I want you to do to-night. Give me *your* hand, and let me lead *you* to Jesus. Oh! be saved to-night! Be won to-night. Be really decided for Jesus to-night! Be on the Lord's side. Procrastinate no longer.

But you may ask, What do you mean by procrastination? I daresay you read it when you were a child at school. Procrastination simply means putting off until to-morrow, what should be done to-day. Its meaning was burned into me by a copy slip I used in my school days. Hundreds of times I wrote it—"Procrastination is the thief of time." I should like a similar copy slip to be put into every school to-day, and I tell you how I would alter it—"Procrastination is the thief of souls." There is not a man in hell to-night that meant to be there. There is not a single soul lost that ever meant to be so. Each meant to get right with God some day, but put it off just one day

too long, and died suddenly in sin. And *you* mean to come to Jesus some day. Why put it off, then?

Rowland Hill was perfectly right when he labelled it "Procrastination—the recruiting officer of hell." What? "Procrastination the recruiting officer of hell!" Yes. There is nothing leads a man to perdition like procrastination—putting of till to-morrow what should be done to-day. That is what it means. And what should you do to-day? Bow at the feet of Jesus. Make up your mind for the Lord. Decide for the Lord. You have thought on many a previous occasion that you would be a Christian; but you could not make up your mind. Oh! to-night, be the Lord's. May the Lord's mercy meet you, as it met Lot. "And *while he lingered*, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the Lord being merciful unto him." The infinite mercy of that God has spared you till now, and again gives you the opportunity of salvation through this simple message. I wish from the bottom of my heart that I could draw you to Jesus, and get you morally outside this doomed world, as God's angels eventually led out Lot and his family.

By this time it was morning, and the sun was up. The inhabitants of Sodom were beginning to stir about; and I think I see that company going down the street. It would be a strange sight to the Sodomites, doubtless. Two angels, and each with two captives. One had Lot in one hand, and his wife in the other. The other angel had the two daughters by the hand. They were being fairly dragged out. And is that the way men get converted? you ask. Very often. It was the way I got converted.

The Lord really dragged me out of the path of folly and sin I had been so long in. It is really grace that does it. Think of it! I have little doubt the people of Sodom sneered, and the sons-in-law laughed, and that many a joke was made that day as they saw Lot and his family setting forth. Scoffer, you are welcome to your jokes; but you will repent them in the eternal damnation of hell. You will repent your sneers at preacher and preaching, and at Christ my Master, and at God's true people. You will yet repent of all your unbelieving folly, but, let me beseech of you, repent of it ere it be too late.

Yes! without doubt fine fun these Sodomites had, as they saw Lot led to the outside of their city, and then treating his exodus as nothing but a joke, they resumed their ways of sin, and business went on as usual. "They did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded," says our Lord. They held their market; their exchange was opened; business men met in it; and in came the peasants with their produce from the country. The housewives went out to buy the food for the day, and everybody was busy. The sons-in-law would no doubt be there—godless men they were—and they would be telling their friends how the old father-in-law had come in the dead of night, and roused them with a foolish story about their city being about to be destroyed. Why, it never was more prosperous. Look at the sun. It never shone more brightly. Yes, quite true, "the sun was risen upon the earth, when Lot entered into Zoar" (ver. 23), and outwardly all was unchanged in nature, and in the city. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation" or "outward show" (Luke xvii. 20) is our Lord's re-

mark, which leads to His comment on Sodom's case. Note this, for God is not going to give the world one single bit of warning, when He judges it, any more than He gave Sodom. Its only warning was the angels leading Lot out of it, and that warning they clearly despised, just as careless men despise the fact that God is saving many by the gospel now, just before the Lord comes again.

And now what about Lot? Led outside the city, he and those with him are put on the road to safety; but being on the road is not enough—they must reach the spot of safety. Hence the emphatic injunction that now rings in his ears: "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed" (ver. 17). Sinner, have you really escaped to Christ? "Escape for thy life," is the word. "Look not behind thee," do not turn back; "neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." That is also God's monitory word to you, my friend. Have you escaped for your life? Then look not behind. Tarry not. Reach the only spot of safety, Christ. Your life is in danger. Soul, your eternal destiny hangs in the balance to-night. Know this, that there is nothing but judgment for those who tarry in the plain. There is no safety until you reach God's appointed spot at the mountain top. There is no safety except in Christ, in the blessed Saviour, who died and lives again. If you trust in Him, He will save you for time and for eternity.

Fairly outside the city, Lot pleads for a little bit of a respite—a little bit of the world, so to speak. It is a strange thing how the heart clings to what is to be

judged. He says, "Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one; oh, let me escape thither . . . and my soul shall live" (ver. 20). He gains his point, and goes to Zoar instead of to the hill-top. And now what do I read? "The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground." As Lot got to the place of comparative safety the doomed places around were destroyed; for "the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all" (Luke xvii. 29). Shortlived indeed was Sodom's fate after Lot's departure.

At Zoar Lot had safety, but he had not quietude, for he had not implicitly obeyed the Lord. The soul that turns to God in a half-hearted way is safe, but he is not very happy. Many a man who believes in Jesus is not at peace, I will tell you why. He does not fully follow the Lord. He has not got enough energy of soul, perhaps. You have just enough of Christ to make you miserable. There are many men of that sort, and Lot illustrates them. He is safe, but not at rest in Zoar, so presently he goes on to the mountain top, to the real place of safety (ver. 30). The real place of safety for you and me is to be in Christ, and then to be occupied with Christ, to be delighting in Christ, as He now is accepted in glory. We need not only to trust Him, not only to believe in Him, not only to rest in the work that He finished for us, but to have the heart occupied with Christ, and Christ alone.

The man who simply looks to Christ in faith for salvation, and does not break thoroughly with the world, is never very happy. You will find him troubled by doubts, and fears, and uncertainty. That was what happened to Lot. He was saved, but he was not happy till he went to the spot to which God bade him go.

And now one word about Lot's wife. We read that she "looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt." Half-hearted soul! "Remember Lot's wife." Nearly saved, but not quite! Near to the place of safety; but not in it. Are you almost converted, but not quite? To be "almost persuaded" is of no avail. "Remember Lot's wife!" if such be your state.

It is quite possible that you may have been impressed, and been made somewhat anxious, before to-day. Possibly you have been brought under the sound of the gospel by some Christian friend against your will. Do you believe its tale? It is true. But you say, I cannot believe that God will judge a scene like this. "Remember Lot's wife." That was the thought, I believe, that Lot's wife indulged in as she walked along. She lingered a bit behind her husband, and then came up this thought—I do not think the Lord will judge the place after all. Although her body was outside Sodom, her heart was within it. Thus thinking, she determined—spite of the word, "Look not behind thee"—to have a little bit of a look, and just at the moment she was entering Zoar, the place of safety, she disobeyed God, and judgment overtook her. This foolish woman disobeys the plain command of the Lord, "Look not behind thee." Unbelief led to disobedience. She evidently did not

believe that God would judge Sodom, and harbouring the thought, Was it true? she turned, and "she became a pillar of salt."

Friend, have you learned the lesson of the pillar of salt? A stranger travelling through that scene afterwards, and looking over the blackened country as he journeyed, would, with surprise, be attracted by the bright and shining pillar; untouched by smoke, which met his view. Small wonder if he said, "What means this?" Lot's wife did not fall in the judgment of Sodom. It was a distinct judgment by the hand of God on unbelief, which He always judges sooner or later. Disobedience, too, He always judges.

And there that pillar of salt stood, a witness to the awful folly of the soul that disobeys God. My dear unsaved friends, may God cause you to learn the proper lesson from that beacon. And what is it? Be whole-hearted. Be simple and sincere. Do not procrastinate. Believe in Jesus fully. Receive Him, and let Christ, the heavenly Saviour, be the object of your heart, and from this moment set out to serve Him. "Remember Lot's wife." You must push on in faith and be saved, or you will be cut down in unbelief shortly. You must reach the spot of safety, or be cut off. She was very near the place, but not in it; and how she resembles lots of souls in Christendom to-day!

Perhaps you say, Whom do you mean? Unsaved friend, "thou art the man." Thou hast been moved, touched, reached, almost saved, but thou art still outside the place of safety. Possibly your friends think you are all right, but God knows, and you know also in your conscience, that you are not all right; and the future will show that, too, if you die in your

sins. Oh! God give you just now to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, to be Christ's fully, and to walk in His service till He come? I trust that whatever you and I forget, we shall each of us, day by day, "remember Lot's wife."

Haste, traveller, haste! the night comes on,
And many a shining hour is gone;
The storm is gathering in the west,
And thou art far from home and rest.
Haste, traveller, haste!

Oh! far from home thy footsteps stray:
Christ is the life, and Christ the way,
And Christ the light. Yon setting sun
Sinks ere the morn is scarce begun.
Haste, traveller, haste!

The rising tempest sweeps the sky,
The rains descend, the winds are high:
The waters swell, and death and fear
Beset thy path—no refuge near.
Haste, traveller, haste!

Oh! yes; a shelter you may gain,
A covert from the wind and rain—
A hiding-place, a rest, a home,
A refuge from the wrath to come.
Haste, traveller, haste!

Then linger not in all the plain;
Flee for thy life, the mountain gain!
Look not behind, make no delay;
Oh! speed thee, speed thee on thy way.
Haste, traveller, haste!

Poor, lost, benighted soul, art thou
Willing to find salvation now?
There yet is hope—hear mercy's call:
Truth, life, light, way, in Christ is all.
Haste, traveller, haste!

CHAPTER XII.

A Night of Wrestling.

DETERMINATION.

Gen. xxxii.

TO be alone with God for the first time is the most important moment in the history of any man. Have you ever been alone with God yet? If not, my friend, I hope you will get there to-night. Without any doubt this chapter describes the most momentous hour of Jacob's life—when he was "left alone" with God. That which makes the history of Jacob so very interesting, and in a certain sense so attractive, is this, that there is a great deal of Jacob in all of us; and, knowing that, what a comfort it is to discover that if there be one title of God found more abundantly in Scripture than another, it is this —"The God of Jacob."

In the last book of the Old Testament you find this remarkable expression: "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD; yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau" (Mal. i. 2, 3). I have no doubt that Esau had a much finer natural character than Jacob, and the wonderful thing is that God loved the man that clearly had not a fine natural character. I say "Thank God" as I see that, for there is hope for me; and you may say from the bottom of your heart, "Thank God,

there is hope for me." Yes, my friend, there is hope for you, whoever and whatever you may be.

I do not think many of us would like to have all our history told out in public. Would you? I should not. You would not like to have your life written, except some discriminative and gentle biographer would write to order, just putting in the nice bits—the good qualities, the amiable traits, the benevolent deeds, and the moral virtues that would please your friends, and that would please you, too; and leaving out all the unattractive side of your life. You would not like your whole history written, would you? No, you say, I should not.

Now, God is a great biographer, and with Him is no respect of persons, so He has written the history of Jacob as he was, and although his history was not at all a creditable one as a son, a brother, or a nephew, if we think of man, nor as a saint, if we think of God, yet before the tale ends I find God saying, "Yet I loved Jacob." Thank God for these words, they are a great comfort to my heart.

In the chapter before us you will notice presently that when Jacob gets down on his knees, and turns to the Lord in prayer, he says, "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac." He does not use the expression "My God." He does not like to use it. He feels so ashamed of himself, I think, and yet the title that God uses so plentifully in Scripture is—"The God of Jacob." Read the Psalms, read the Old Testament, and you will be surprised at the number of times it occurs.

Jacob was a man whose heart was in the earth, yet a man on whom God had his eye for blessing. What a wonderful thing that God has his eye upon you for

blessing, yet I daresay you have been able to manage like Jacob, and you have hitherto escaped His blessing. But this chapter takes us to the point, where all Jacob's management came to naught—though there never was a finer manager in this scene than Jacob—and when he found himself a poor cripple, helpless, and needing to be sustained, he had his name changed, received the blessing of the Lord, who overcame his opposition, and then he got to know God.

The sovereignty of God, exercised in grace, is a grand thing. I know people object to it. I know sinners kick at it. They think God is very arbitrary. Well, supposing you were let alone to go your own way, friend, and supposing I had gone the whole length of my way, what would the end be? I will tell you. As far as I am concerned—and I may say the same about you—the path would have ended in hell and eternal judgment would have been our portion. What then has happened? God has come in and arrested us. God has come in, put His hand upon us, and converted many of us. I believe if I were asking every converted man and woman in the hall to lift their arm, as a token that they were saved, I should get a good number lifted up, and if I said, Tell us how it was that you were turned to the Lord? every one here would reply, "It was sovereign grace that laid hold of me. I owe all to the Lord's grace!"

But you might turn to me and say, What about the very scripture you have quoted, "I loved Jacob and I hated Esau"—is not that very arbitrary? No, the ninth of Romans makes this plain. There I read: "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him

that calleth: it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid" (vers. 11-14). People often make a great outcry against God about this. But did you ever ponder it, or find out where this statement as to God's love was written? It is found, as we have already seen, in the last book of the Old Testament—Malachi. God does not record these words until thirteen hundred years after the men named had passed out of the scene. The Lord then lets out the secret why He blessed Jacob, and it was —because He loved him.

Why then did He hate Esau? If you follow the history of Esau—though he was a nice, natural man —you will find this, that he and his descendants were at heart deeply, and perseveringly opposed to God. I do not doubt that Jacob was opposed to God in the beginning. So was I. So was every believer in this hall to-night. But there came a moment when God broke him thoroughly down—the night on which he was alone with God. From that time Jacob was a changed man; and though in his life he was not what we could call a bright and shining light as a saint, still he died in faith very triumphantly, and went out of the scene very beautifully.

The inspired record of Jacob's departure runs thus: "By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff" (Heb. xi. 21). And why did he lean on the top of his staff? Because he could not hold himself up without support, he had learned to be dependent. He went off the scene worshipping, and his death was bright, if his life was not. We should

all take a lesson from this, and seek to live brightly for Christ, and then, should the Lord call us away, we shall pretty surely die brightly. People sometimes say, "How did he die?" But I want to know, "How did he live?"

Jacob's life up to this point in Genesis xxxii. was a sorrowful one. God had purposed to bless him before he was born, as you read in a previous chapter, where the Lord said unto Rebekah, "Two nations *are* in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and *the one* people shall be stronger than *the other* people; and the elder shall serve the younger" (Gen. xxv. 23). That is to say, God purposed to bless Jacob beyond Esau. In the end of that chapter, you recollect, Esau sells his birthright for a mess of lentil pottage. Esau was a worldly man, and he sells his birthright—that which belonged to him as the first-born. He comes in faint from the chase, and finds Jacob making pottage. Esau desires it, and Jacob says, "Sell me this day thy birthright"; and Esau replies: "Behold, I *am* at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up and went his way. Thus Esau *despised his birthright*" (xxv. 31-34).

Esau starts his worldly history by flinging lightly back in the face of God that which His goodness had given him. No wonder his end was so bad, or that God calls him a "profane person" (Heb. xii. 16). Do not forget this—that every sinner has, in a certain sense, a birthright. You have been born into a world to which the Saviour has come, and that Saviour came

to save sinners, and if you do not receive that Saviour, but hold on in the ways of the world, deluded by Satan, and caring only for the things of this life, you simply follow the footsteps of Esau, and despise your birthright for a mess of pottage—that is, for the things that minister to the body, and give you comfort while you go through this world, from which you will have shortly to pass away. "Thus Esau despised his birthright," is God's comment, and the Holy Ghost bids us in our day beware, "lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright" (Heb. xii. 16). Since that day many a soul has passed into eternity, who has sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. And what is that? A little bit of the world!

I do not admire the way in which Jacob got the birthright; nevertheless he prized what Esau despised. God meant him to have it; but Jacob schemed and bargained for it in an unworthy and unbrotherly way; and next you find in the twenty-seventh chapter that he schemes to get the blessing. God had already purposed that the blessing was to be his; but Jacob was not content to wait upon God for it; so he and his mother planned a scheme to attain it. The twenty-seventh chapter of Genesis presents a very humiliating spectacle, since it shows to what a low ebb of moral degradation even a saint may fall. Isaac loved "savoury meat," and bade Esau get him some, adding, "that my soul may bless thee before I die." Rebekah prepares some before Esau could return, and then Jacob—the supplanter—for that is the meaning of his name—goes in and takes the venison that has been made ready, and surreptitiously, and with untruth on his lips, gets the blessing. Isaac pronounces over his

head the blessing that God had designed for him, but Jacob did not get it in the right way, and we do well to note what is the result. What follows shows that where there is a wrong action it always brings its own reward even in this world.

Jacob never has earthly happiness from that day forth. He has to leave his home, and becomes a wanderer from that time. He has to fly in order to escape from Esau's fury. He gets alongside of his uncle in a far-off land. His uncle deals hardly with him, and cheats him, as he had cheated everybody else. He is paid back in his own coin absolutely. The next thing is that he has to get away from Laban clandestinely, and then you find that his daughter is ruined, his sons become murderers, his old nurse dies, then Rachel his wife dies, and he comes home to find that his mother is dead. The next thing is, his own sons deceive him, and he has to mourn, for the supposed death of Joseph, for many many years. At length he is obliged by famine to go into Egypt, and there he dies. That is what I call the natural side of the man's history, and a striking illustration it is of the truth of the principle in Scripture, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. vi. 7).

God gives us the history of Jacob thus fully in order to show how His grace could meet a man of that kind, rise above all his failures, and bless him; and therein, I repeat, is the value of Scripture biography as compared with every other biography. If you take up the biographies of to-day you find all that is nice, and amiable, and kind about a man related in them. The biographer, however, throws the mantle of charity over those weaknesses, sins, and downfalls of his subject, of which he may be aware, and of

course can say nothing of many more of which he is ignorant. What is the result? You have not the real man before you. The consequence of it is that a young person takes up a book of this sort, reads the history say of some good, earnest, devoted Christian man, and then puts it down in despair, saying, "It is no use my trying to be a Christian, for I could not be like that It is very doubtful if I am one at all." Let me cheer you by just saying, That is not the man at all—it is only a bit of him; and what you are finding in yourself was most likely in him, only the uncomely bits of his life have been omitted. Now the Bible gives you the man as he is in absolute fact, and then tells you what God's grace can do for such.

In the thirty-second chapter of Genesis we reach the moment in his history when this planning and scheming man Jacob is on his way back to his father's house. As he goes back, with his wives, and all that he has gathered in the land of Padan-aram, the angels of God meet him. That was a good thing. They meet him, but carry him no message. He is, I think, uneasy, although he says, "This is God's host." The Lord's eyes are upon him evidently, and he knows it. Whether God will support and sustain him is the question in his mind, for he has to meet Esau. He sends messengers to Esau, who are to say, "My *lord* Esau; thy *servant* Jacob saith," &c. (vers. 4, 5). What a message to his *brother!* Esau, "*my lord*"; and Jacob "*thy servant.*" Sin always brings its fruit, and wrong its recompense. The man is perfectly conscious of what ill he has done to Esau. He knows that full well, and now his conscience begins to work. It is a fine thing when the conscience begins to work.

Friend, has your conscience begun to work before God about the evil of your life? Has your conscience yet got uneasy about your own conduct in the presence of God? Jacob's was evidently very uneasy, for the messengers are told to go to Esau, and say, "Thy *servant* Jacob says" to "my lord Esau." Fancy this to his own brother. But what the English bard says, "Conscience doth make cowards of us all," is perfectly true. Thank God for it. Do not stifle it! Take care that the devil does not sear yours with a hot iron, for we read of some "having a conscience seared with a hot iron" (1 Tim. iv. 2). What does that mean? That you have resisted the pricks of conscience till it has ceased altogether to act. It is numb —lifeless. You have had a bad history. At first you were perfectly ashamed of it in the presence of God, and in the presence of man; but you got so "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. iii. 13), and continuance in it, spite of the pricks of conscience that by-and-by—will, lust, and sin having got the upper hand entirely—conscience altogether ceased to act, being by the devil "seared with a hot iron." Awful state! I pity the man that has got his conscience seared with a hot iron.

Jacob's conscience, though dull enough for many a year, had not ceased to act. It is working now, you see, and is not in any sense relieved when the messengers return, saying: "We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed." If your conscience is working before God, and you are greatly afraid and distressed, all I can say to you is, I am thankful. It is better for a man to be in that state, having his

conscience exercised, and in distress about his sins, than to wake up in eternity, and then to find that his whole life has been a huge mistake.

But now when "greatly afraid and distressed," what does Jacob do? Ah! he is Jacob still; trying to make the best of things. So again he makes his plans. To meet a supposedly angry brother coming with four hundred men, eager to avenge their master's wrongs, is a terrible affair for Jacob. What can he do? He divides his company into two, next goes to prayer, and then sends a present to appease Esau. I have to meet him, is his thought, but how shall I do so? First, I think I had better put my party into two companies, so that if he smites the one, then the other will escape. Do you know what really happened when he met his offended brother? "Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him; and they wept" (chap. xxxiii. 4). Poor silly Jacob, he just illustrates the action of the guilty sinner.

Are you afraid to meet God, and are you trying to "appease him with a present"? What a mistake! "Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him!" Just as we read of the father in Luke xv., who, when he saw the returning prodigal "a great way off," "ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." Do you suppose that anything you could bring would affect the feelings of God towards you? Impossible! Understand clearly that nothing you can do—nothing you can bring—no present you may send, will touch the feelings of God towards you, my friend. Do you know what His feeling is towards you? Love! "God is love," and He has proved it in the gift of His Son. "For God so loved the world,

that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). Again: "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John iv. 14). Further: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins" (1 John iv. 9, 10).

Jacob is "greatly distressed" just because he does not know Esau's feelings toward him, so he makes his plans, and then he says his prayers. Lots of people do the same thing. This scene really brings out our true character. We make our plans, and then go to God to bless them. Sinners do it, and saints do it too, sometimes. Yet you see God had said to Jacob, "I am with thee, and will keep thee" (chap. xxviii. 15). Esau would not have been able to touch him, and if his ways had not been deceitful, he would not have been afraid of Esau; but, you see, his conscience is working. Then, he turns to the Lord in prayer and says: "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children" (vers. 9-11). Where is faith in this? There is no faith. If he had only had in his

soul the sense that God was with him, he could not have prayed thus. There is nothing more blessed for a man than to have in his soul the sense that God is *for* him, and with him. But you see Jacob had not that. He was afraid of his brother, whom he counted his enemy. He was not, though he might have been; it was Jacob's own conscience that suggested that Esau was against him. God was for him, but he had lost the sense of it.

Observe his address to the Lord: "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac." He is not able to say "*my* God." He was not near enough to Him just then, though when he was dying he was near enough to say it. Then he turned and said to Joseph, "Behold, I die: but God shall be with you." He knew, and was at home with Him then. A very different state of soul was Jacob in on his deathbed. Here, however, he is at a distance from God. He has not learned what God is. This night, however, he was to learn God—His power, as well as the goodness of His heart.

His prayer over, he resumes his plans, and sends a present to Esau. He divides the present into five droves, so as to make it look as imposing as possible, and he sends his servants forward. To the foremost he says: "When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, Whose *art* thou? and whither goest thou? and whose *are* these before thee? Then thou shalt say, *They be* thy servant Jacob's; it *is* a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he *is* behind us" (vers. 17, 18). And so he commanded the second, and third, and all who followed the droves: and then he said to himself, "I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and

afterward I will see his face; *peradventure* he will accept of me."

I believe in these words you have the soul-history of many described, possibly of some in this room to-night. How many labour under the delusion that they have something to do to propitiate God. What a mistake! "I will *appease* him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; *peradventure* he will accept of me." Of course if your present is the ground upon which you are to appear before God, you may well say "peradventure." Can you appease Him with a present? Impossible! Yet that is the first thought in the heart of the sinner when he would draw near to God. He wants to appease Him. It is in the heart of a child even. I remember perfectly a lady telling me once of her niece who was disobedient. Her mother bade her go to bed at a certain hour, and left the house. When the hour came, the aunt said, "Now, Mary, go to bed." The child refused. The aunt rejoined: "Then I must put you to bed. Mother's orders must be obeyed." The child retorted, "If you put me to bed, I will not say my prayers," and kept her word, as to bed she was put and the gas turned out. Very soon conscience began to work in the darkness, which no child of six years of age likes. Her aunt soon heard a pitiful voice calling her. "What is it, my dear?" she asked. "Aunty, if I were to buy that box of sweets I saw yesterday in Ferguson's shop window, and give it to God, do you think He would forgive me?"

I hear you say, "That was a child." But the same thing may come out in your history and mine. Did we not each think—if not say—"I will appease him with the present"? He needs no appeasing, or turn-

ing of the heart to us. His feelings toward us were shown in the gift of His Son. "God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him" . . . and "to be a propitiation for our sins." You do not need, in that sense, to appease Him. His heart is towards you. There is nothing in His heart towards you but love. We needed to be reconciled to God; not God to us. He ever was and is *for* us.

I quite admit that, because sin has come in, there must be propitiation. But propitiation is not to turn God's heart towards us. It is required in order to meet the righteous claims of His throne, and that He may be able to let His heart flow out to us in grace, and accept of us in righteousness. The love of God is shown in the gift of His Son, and His righteousness in the death of His Son on the tree. The holy, spotless Son of God—Jesus—who had no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He offered Himself voluntarily on the cross to God, and met the claims of God in respect of sin. In the cross righteousness was demonstrated, holiness maintained, and the character of God vindicated. If God passed over our sin, as lightly as man would pass it over, where would be His holiness? On the other hand, if He judged sin without giving an opportunity of escape, where were His love? The cross of Christ is the divine solution of these problems. I get the love of God displayed in the provision of the Victim, and I get the righteousness of God maintained in the death of that Victim in atonement. On the altar the righteous claims of God are met, and sin is put away. God's holiness is justified, and His righteousness is demonstrated. The blood of the

Victim cleanses away the sins of the poor, guilty sinner.

Thus, you have not to appease Him now. But you may turn and say, I have been so long away from Him that I am afraid to come to Him. You need not be afraid of Him. He would fain win your heart's confidence. I know it has been said that Jesus came to do the work by which the Father is now reconciled to us. Such a thought is totally foreign alike to Scripture, and to God's nature. God was never unreconciled. God's heart was ever towards man. Man turned away from God. Man would not trust God. "God is love," and "God is light." And what He is, He has ever been. His character has been shown us in the manifestation of His love, and in the maintenance of His righteousness.

If you were to get forgiveness without the cross of Christ, you would never be really happy. You would not be sure that God might not some day raise the question of righteousness with you. If, on the other hand, you see that God is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus; if you see that His holy nature has been expressed in the judgment of sin on the tree, when Christ suffered for sins, the just for the unjust; if you see that atonement has been made, and that all God's righteous claims have been met to the uttermost in the atoning death of His blessed Son, then you have a firm basis—an imperishable and unshakable groundwork for the peace of your soul. The atonement alone can be that firm basis; by it you see God saves you, and saves you *righteously*. He saves you in love, but he saves you on the ground of a righteous atonement.

There is a doctrine abroad that God is so good,

that He will not judge sin. He loves everybody, and will judge nobody. Lie of hell! Judge nobody? Well, if He does not judge anybody, He is not God. He is no better than you and I. If He does not judge sin, He is no better than the sinner. God must judge sin to the uttermost, and, blessed be His name, He has judged it in the cross of His dear Son, that He may save the sinner who trusts in His Son, who once died on the tree. That is the gospel. He maintains His righteousness, while saving the vilest. Hence the apostle can say, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." And then he says: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth" (Rom. viii. 32, 33). Look! God is on your side. And if God be for us, who can be against us? My friend, if you have thought to appease Him with a present, may your mind be changed to-night. If you have thought, "I will see his face; *peradventure* he will accept of me," listen, and I will tell you what I know. Atonement has been made by Jesus, and accepted by God, and the One who offered the atonement to God has gone up into glory to God, and He has been accepted for me, and I know I am accepted in Him. Jesus did everything, and I get all the benefit and the blessing of His work. Oh, silly soul, to harbour the thought of appeasing God with a present. You need conversion. You need to be reconciled to God. You need to have your thoughts of God changed. You need to be broken down. You need to get alone with God. That is a different thing altogether from appeasing Him.

When Luther went up the five hundred steps at the

Vatican on his knees, he was doing what Jacob did here. He was practically saying, "I will appease Him," but when he got half-way up, he was struck by the text, "The just shall live by faith," saw his mistake, and went quickly down. The poor Indian Fakir, with the hook in his back, who is hung up for hours in the eye of the sun, no doubt thinks that he is going to appease God by that. He too is mistaken. When his servants said to Naaman, "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?" —yes, he would surely have done some meritorious act to get his leprosy cleansed—"how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?" (2 Kings v. 13), it was the same spirit. But you will never appease Him with presents. He does not want to be appeased. All He wants He has found in Christ, and all you need, sinner, you can find in Christ. And if you find Him you need not say, "Peradventure he will accept of me," for "he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Eph. i. 6), is the blessing of every believer in Jesus.

The episode of sending the present concluded, Jacob transports his family over the brook Jabbok, and then we read these striking words, "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day" (ver. 24). A remarkable night was this night of wrestling. What do you suppose this was? It has often been thought that this chapter is a picture of what you might call wrestling with God in prayer—an illustration of a kind of earnestness that people ought to have when praying. But look at it. It does not say Jacob wrestled. It says, "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of

the day." Do you not see? You can understand the difference between Jacob beginning to wrestle, and this nameless man coming to wrestle with him. Jacob opposed him. You know a wrestler wants to put his opponent on his back, and the better wrestler waits his time and opportunity, and then with a sudden jerk puts his opponent on his back, and then the man is at his mercy. This man wrestles all night unsuccessfully with Jacob, nor gains a point till break of day, so keen is the supplanter's determination to resist. I call this chapter Determination, because Jacob was determined to resist God, and God, so to speak, said to him, "Jacob, I am determined to overcome you." And thank God, He had His way. Picture the scene. Jacob was alone, alone with God, and stoutly opposed to Him. Again I would repeat, Have you ever been left alone with God? Have you ever spent a night with God? It is a wonderful thing when a man gets alone with God.

A friend was telling me of his conversion a little while ago. How did it happen? He heard the preaching in this hall some months ago, and the Word of God touched him sorely. As he passed out of the door I happened to meet him, and knowing him slightly, I asked him, "Well, are you decided for Christ?" "No," said he, with an emphasis on the word as if to imply *I never will be either*, for he was a man that did not believe the gospel. He had aired his opinions as an atheist for twenty long years, and his answer seemed to say, I will never believe in your Christ. I met him three weeks afterwards. "I hear you are converted," said I; "is it true?" "Thank God," he said, "it is true"; and the tears trickled down his cheeks. "How did it come about?"

I asked. "Well," he said, "it was that night that at the hall door I told you point blank that I was not decided for Christ, and at that time I never meant to be. After I went home I got wretched in the thought that I had refused the Lord." "What did you do?" "I got out of my bed, and got down on my knees alone in the room with God, and there and then I turned to the Lord. Alone in my bedroom I confessed my sins, sought mercy, and found peace with God." "Thank God!" I could only say.

Sinner, were you ever alone with God? I can tell you this, that if you die in your sins you will be alone in hell for eternity. Will there not be plenty of people there? Yes, but they will not be any company for, or comfort to you. You will have the sense of unbroken solitariness. "Jacob was left alone," for blessing this night, and there never was a man converted in this world but was *converted alone.* There were four hundred people in the hall where I was the night I was converted, but *I was alone with God*—altogether alone with God. My life passed in review before me, and I clearly saw the future, but I was oblivious to man, and I heard nothing but the voice of God speaking to me.

When Paul was converted by the light from the glory, what does he say? "They that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me" (Acts xxii. 9). He was alone with God. The woman in the fourth chapter of John was alone with Jesus when He saved her. Nicodemus was alone with Jesus when his soul was blessed. Peter was alone morally, when Andrew "brought him to Jesus."

It is the moment of blessing when the soul gets

alone with God, and here Jacob was left alone, and God drew near determined to bless him. Have you ever in the history of your soul been thus alone with God? I will tell you what passes. God draws near to bless you. Do not oppose Him. Oh! do not oppose Him. It shall be with you as with Jacob. "And there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." My friend, is God dealing with you? Unsaved soul, is God wrestling with you? Is He putting His hand on you, by sickness, by feeble health, or failing circumstances? There are a hundred ways that God takes to bring a man to Himself. If He is dealing with you, do not refuse, do not resist Him. Your eternal destiny hangs upon your bowing to God. You may resist Him once too often. You may strive against His grace, and the working of His Spirit, one night, one hour too many.

Observe, the man wrestled with Jacob till the breaking of the day. Oh, what mercy on God's part! What patience with the opposer. To break him down was God's purpose. You must be broken down. You must be reduced. Jacob was in the energy of his own strength opposing the Lord really, and at length when the day broke—it is always the break of day in the history of the soul when God gets His way with us after being alone with God—"when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh"—touched him in the very secret spring of his strength—"and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh." What is the meaning of that? "Let me go," says the Lord, and what says Jacob? "I cannot let you go now. I cannot sustain myself. I cannot support myself now that my

strength is all gone. I am crippled. Lord, I cannot do without Thee." That was the lesson Jacob learned, and a blessed one it was. Have you learned that, my friend?

I have learned that I cannot do without Him down here where I am, and nothing has surprised me more than this, that the Lord cannot do without me where He is. Jesus would not be happy in heaven without me, so fixed is His love on me, and on my side I find that I cannot be happy on earth without Him. That is the reciprocity of affection. God will have you, Christian friend, and me there in glory by-and-by, but meantime we cannot get on without the Lord here.

And now Jacob says, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." "Let me go, for the day breaketh," his victor had said, but Jacob will not release him from his grasp. What was that? True dependence is being wrought in him. He finds his joint is out, and he clings to the One who has crippled him. Friend! cling to the mighty One. Cling to the One who brings you down, and reduces you. It is blessing to cling to Him. It is sorrow to oppose Him. If He says, "Let me go," what will you say? "I will not let thee go except thou bless me."

And now the nameless man says to the helpless cripple, "What is thy name? And he said, Jacob," which means a supplanter—a sorry name that—supplanter! What is our common name? Sinner! That is my name, in nature. Now hear the gospel of that moment: "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob (supplanter), but Israel (a prince of God); for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." You are a prince, says God to

him. You have lost your own strength, and your old name, and now you are clinging to Me, and you are strong.

The change of a name, in Scripture, always teaches this truth, that the person who had his name changed was subservient to the one who changed the name. You find in the Old Testament many illustrations of this. God changed Abram's name to Abraham. Pharaoh changed Joseph's name to Zaphnath-Paaneah. Nebuchadnezzar altered Daniel's to Belteshazzar, &c. Again, when Simon, the fisherman of Bethsaida, was brought to Christ by his brother Andrew, we read, "And when Jesus beheld him he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation a stone" (John i. 42). This change of name indicated an immense change in Simon's history, for what is a stone? A bit of a rock! And what is the rock? Christ! And what is a Christian? A living stone. He belongs to Christ, and has His life. You belong to Christ, my fellow-believer. You are no longer a poor sinner in your sins, but since you are converted, and quickened by the Spirit of God, you have your name changed. You are a living stone, for you have had to do with the Son of the living God, and by the reception of the word of the Son of God, which has entered into your soul, you have passed from death unto life, and are indissolubly connected with Him.

Here then Jacob is told, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." He was to have a new name and place before God, who had prevailed against, and broken him down;

thereon Jacob had clung to Him, and He had blessed him. Marvellous moment in his history.

My friend, you came into this hall to-night an unsaved sinner, and you may go out of it a saint. Oh, you say, that is a very rapid change. I admit it, but that is what the gospel does. But, you say, I thought the saints were all in heaven. Some of them are. Many are on earth, and you may become one. Do you say, I could not think of taking that place, and calling myself a saint? God calls you one, immediately you take your place as a sinner, own your guilt, and flee to Jesus as a Saviour. He saves you, His blood cleanses you, and God's Spirit seals you, and you become a Christian. Immediately you are such you are the property of the Lord, *separated* to Him, and you are a saint. Do you remember what the Lord said to Ananias of Damascus on the occasion of Saul's conversion? He was to go to him and open his eyes. Ananias replies, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy *saints* at Jerusalem" (Acts ix. 13). This is the first time the word is used in the New Testament; but there it is the people of God on earth who are called saints. Saul had been persecuting them. But Ananias goes to his house, and entering, puts his hands on him and calls him "Brother Saul!"

What a thrill would go through Saul as he heard these words, and what thoughts be suggested to his heart! I think he must have said: "Thank God, I am a brother. I am among the Lord's people. I am among the saints, for he actually calls me Brother Saul!" The epistles of this said Saul—afterwards called Paul—are full of advice to "the saints." What does that mean? People separated to God. Chris-

tian, you are one separated to God. You perhaps say, I thought that the saints were persons who ought to walk very holily. I admit that is what we ought to do, but it is not our walk that makes us saints, but being saints we should walk as such. Remember it is the call of God that makes you a saint. So wrote Paul, "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called saints" (Rom. i. 7)—*i.e.*, saints by God's call.

Jacob got a new name. Peter got a new name. And you and I get a new name as soon as we are quickened by the Holy Ghost, and are thenceforth called saints. You may say, Jacob did not walk very differently after this. Not immediately; there was a change further on, when he got a fuller revelation of God to his soul. At this point he says to the Lord: "Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there" (ver. 29). The Lord does not tell him His name at this point. Do you know why? There was idolatry in Jacob's household. There were idols kept and allowed in the household, and God could not brook that. But further on in Jacob's history the Lord says to him, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there" (chap. xxxv. 1). Immediately Jacob says to his household, "Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments" (ver. 2). They are put away, and the household turns to the Lord thoroughly. What happens? God confirms Jacob's new name, and reveals His own name to him, for we read: "Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel. And God said unto him, I am God Almighty" (vers. 10, 11). Jacob does not need to

turn to God here and ask Him His name. No. "God said unto him, I am God Almighty." He reveals Himself. He, so to speak, says, Jacob, you have got rid of your idols, now you shall have a revelation of what I am, and I will tell you what I will do for you also. "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; and the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land. And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him" (vers. 11-13). Jacob practically and thoroughly removed that which was a hindrance to the revelation of the Lord's name, and as he got this revelation, I think it is very interesting to note, his own new name is confirmed. The same confirmation of the name takes place in Peter's case in Matthew xvi. God always confirms what His grace bestows on us.

Name of Jesus! highest name!
  Name that earth and heaven adore!
From the heart of God it came,
  Leads me to God's heart once more.

Name of Jesus! living tide!
  Days of drought for me are past;
How much more than satisfied
  Are the thirsty lips at last!

Name of Jesus! dearest name!
  Bread of Heaven, and balm of love;
Oil of gladness, surest claim
  To the treasures stored above.

Jesus gives forgiveness free,
  Jesus cleanses all my stains,
Jesus gives His life to me,
  Jesus always He remains.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Night in a Palace.

ADMONITION.

Dan. v.

GOD always warns before He judges. He is giving you your warning to-night, friend. You will do well to be wiser than Belshazzar. He had his warning, but did not heed it; nevertheless he had it. Had he heeded it, I think it might have ended differently with him, because God, although He does judge, loves mercy. Scripture calls judgment "his strange work" (Isa. xxviii. 21). He loves mercy, He loves blessing. He loves to bless the soul. Do you suppose, friend, that God wants to judge you? No, it is the last thing in His heart; but, if you refuse to be blessed by Him, you must be judged.

Now of all the night scenes in Scripture I think this in the fifth of Daniel one of the most suggestive, and striking, because it shows the way in which God can step into a scene where man is doing his very best to make himself happy without God, and what the effect of the intrusion is. Here we see Belshazzar doing his best to insult and defy Him. And mark this, my friend, Belshazzar is not the only man who has openly insulted God in the way that this

chapter describes. It is a scene of the most daring impiety the eye could possibly rest upon, and when Belshazzar defies God, He as it were rises, and says, We will see who is the greater. Friend, if you are on the road of impiety, sin, carelessness, and opposition to God and His grace, you had better learn the lesson from this chapter, that the man who resists God always gets the worst of it. What God wants is your salvation. He wants your blessing. He desires to bring you into touch with Himself in the day of His grace, for, I repeat, judgment is "his strange work."

Now look at this scene. "Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand" (ver. 1). It must have been a marvellous assembly. The banquet took place in one of the many palaces which adorned the city regarded as the mistress of the earth. Babylon stood on a broad plain, and was exactly square. Its walls ran fifteen miles in each direction, were 300 feet high, 75 feet broad, and pierced by a hundred brazen gates, with lintels and side-posts of brass. The broad river Euphrates divided the city into two parts as it ran through its midst, the river banks being faced with burnt brick, and brazen gates closed the streets which ran at right angles to the river and dipped into the water. Brazen gates, dipping low, also guarded the opening in the walls through which the river glided. Thus defended, Babylon thought herself impregnable. It was a city where all the gaiety, the godlessness, and the luxury that man could possibly surround himself with were gathered together. The king and the inhabitants thought themselves proof against every power, either

heavenly or earthly. But they were mistaken, for they had forgotten God, and He had said by one servant, one hundred and fifty years before, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen" (Isa. xxi. 9); and a hundred years later had predicted the manner of the fall: "One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to show the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end" (Jer. li. 31).

Little did Belshazzar the king regard God, or trouble his head with His predictions,—on the eve of fulfilment—the day that he "made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand." History says it was an annual feast. Of that I am not certain, but Scripture tells us that it was a feast marked by daring impiety on the part of "Belshazzar, whiles he tasted the wine." Many a man has been led to ruin through wine. Whisky will do quite as well. Many a man, many a woman, has made his, or her bed in hell, if not through wine, through whisky. Ah, friend! are you a whisky-lover—a wine-lover? Let Belshazzar warn you. There is no pravity to which the soul will not descend that gets under the influence of strong drink. Its victims worship it, while it damns them. I met a woman a little while ago, in this town, in a stair in College Street, as I passed up to see a sick child. I was led to speak to her about her soul. She listened quietly for a minute or two, and then when I said, "Would you not like to go to heaven?" she nervously said, "Is there any whisky there?" "No," I replied, "and there is no water in hell." She was perfectly sober when she spoke, but it was a revelation as to what governed her. My negative surprised her evidently, and the statement as to hell startled her. Good

would it be for every lover of strong drink if it were borne in mind.

"Belshazzar, whiles he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father (or grandfather) Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone" (vers. 2-4), and they thought they had done bravely, doubtless. But what had they done? I will tell you. Belshazzar had flung down the gauntlet before the eye of God. The bringing into that feast of the golden vessels, which were taken from "the temple of the house of God," was tantamount to saying to Jehovah: "My gods are better than you. My gods helped the men who took your golden vessels, and brought them here." That is what he meant. These golden vessels, brought from the house of the Lord, in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, were exhibited as trophies of the Babylonian victory over Jehovah's people, and therefore over Jehovah.

But who was the king of Babylon? What was this Nebuchadnezzar but the whip that the Lord had selected and used to chastise His guilty and law-breaking people Israel. A hundred years before, He had said: "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take

the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so. . . . Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks" (Isa. x. 5, 6, 7, 12). God raised up Nebuchadnezzar for that purpose. He was the head of gold in the remarkable figure which you read of in the second chapter of this Book of Daniel, and God used him to punish His chosen earthly people, who had departed from Him. All men wondered when they learned that Jehovah had allowed His temple to be razed to the ground, and His holy vessels to be carried to Babylon.

The lesson to be learned from this is, that God will never be a party to hypocrisy, nor will He maintain His people in a false condition. He knows how to take care of His own glory, even though His people utterly fail, so He allows the vessels of His earthly sanctuary to be carried into captivity; but when Belshazzar, intoxicated with wine, flaunts in the face of Jehovah these trophies of victory, as a sort of indication that the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone were those who had helped in the victories, and won these trophies, and thus, you see, insulted God to His very face, then God resents the insult.

Ah, my careless, worldly, sin-loving friend, you may not defy God in the same way perhaps as Belshazzar. You may not be running full tilt against God in exactly the same way as this impious king did, but are you not following dangerously near in his track?

Without doubt the wine had begun to circulate, and had inflamed Belshazzar's mind ere he gave the order that wrought his ruin. "They that be drunken, are drunken in the night," we are told (1 Thess. v. 7), and that this was a night scene is unmistakable from the statement that "in the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote;" and also that "in that night was Belshazzar king of the Chaldeans slain" (vers. 5, 30). In the middle of the festivity, when all is gay and bright, and hilarity and impiety are at their height, all of a sudden God steps in. Now every one knows the utter collapse of everything worldly when God comes in. Bring the Lord into a scene of worldliness, and what is the effect? He spoils it. Solemn thought! It is the effect of sin, and the answer of conscience regarding God as an intruder. How does He intrude here? "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote." It was only part of a hand, but the king saw it. The light of the candlestick shone on it, the eye of the impious monarch was arrested by it, and in a moment that man's conscience awoke with the sense, the eye of God is upon me. Do not forget, my friends, that God has His eye upon you too.

Belshazzar recognises the hand of God as he sees those fingers writing his doom on the plaister of his own palace. What is the result? "The king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed and his

knees smote one against another" (ver. 6). He is frightened. His conscience is reached. It is a blessed thing when a man's conscience gets divinely reached. Has your conscience ever been reached? Come, friend, now frankly and honestly own, has your conscience ever been reached? And have you ever been convicted of your sins against God? Oh, you say, we are all poor sinners. I do not call you a poor sinner. God calls you a guilty sinner. Possibly you are a hardened sinner, even an impious, sacrilegious sinner. Oh, but you say, I have not sinned like Belshazzar. Are you sure of that? Belshazzar made light of the Lord. So have you, my friend, and your guilt is great, for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," Scripture says.

You may not have been mixed up in a scene of revelry and devilry as manifestly as Belshazzar and his guests were, but "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man" (Prov. xxvii. 19). The devil was the spirit that ruled that feast. They were all pleasing themselves, but the devil was behind them all. You have been pleasing yourself, and the devil has been working behind it all, for Satan is the god of this world. Are you aware how Satan has ruled you, governed you? The man who does his own will is in the service of Satan. The man that does his own will is but the property, and the slave of Satan. Therefore our Lord said, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, *his goods are in peace*" (Luke xi. 21). The strong man is the devil; his armour "the pleasures of sin"; his palace the world; and his goods sinners in their sins. Possibly you do not believe that. I do. Of course the devil will not let you believe this solemn fact if he can help it. He

keeps his goods in peace—false peace—till it be too late to get God's peace. Belshazzar pleased himself, and so have you. So did I until Christ met and saved me. That is what He wants to do for you. Will you let Him?

The king saw the part of the hand, and his conscience, although scared by depravity, was reached, for the moment. What was written on the plaister, was perfectly plain, since it was written in Chaldee characters, but the king nevertheless did not understand the import. Blinded by the god of this world, whose utter slave he was—as is every man till God illuminates his heart—writing in his own language failed to convey to his mind any definite sense of what was meant, though he trembled before the hand that wrote his doom. He felt instinctively that One whom he had impiously defied had him in hand.

God was giving Belshazzar his warning ere He judged him. He does the same now, in the day of His grace, ere judgment arrives. He is on the pathway of blessing now, in the gospel, and is saving, not judging. His blessed Son has lived on earth, accomplished redemption, and gone up into glory; and the Holy Ghost has come down to tell the tale that God is now seeking to bring men to believe in, receive, and exalt Him. That is what God is doing now. Judgment is not His work at this moment. He warns men that He may awaken and save them.

I believe God is giving you your warning just now. I wish I saw your "countenance change." I have often seen such a change in a meeting like this; many a careless, worldly, sin-loving man has come into a meeting like this, and the arrow of conviction has entered his conscience, and he has learned he is a

sinner on the road to hell, and his countenance has changed. The night I was converted—and I am not ashamed to admit it—my countenance changed so much that a lady labelled me as a man of five-and-forty, when I was not half that age. Why? Because I looked serious; and thank God, I felt it. I was a convicted sinner—an awakened man—an anxious soul—a man in the travail of the new birth. I saw I was a man hurrying on the road to hell, and that if God cast me into hell, it would be a perfectly righteous action. God grant that you, young man, and you, young woman, may have your "countenance changed" and your thoughts troubled. I should like to see it. Think of the lost opportunities of your life; look at the whole period of guilt and sin in your history of rebellion against God.

Little wonder that Belshazzar's "thoughts troubled him." In a moment the past came up, with its memories of godlessness; the future loomed darkly before him. The eye and hand of God were on him, and he knew it, and "the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." He was profoundly moved, deeply alarmed, and thoroughly wretched, for the moment. Have you ever in your history passed through an experience of this kind, when your countenance changed, your thoughts troubled you, and your knees knocked one against the other? Yes, God was speaking to Belshazzar then, and He is speaking to you to-night. I am certain He is speaking the voice of warning to you, my friend, and your eternal destiny may hang on this night's meeting.

So alarmed was Belshazzar, that, forgetful of kingly dignity, in his anxiety to understand the writing, he

"cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers" (ver. 7). There were plenty of them in Babylon, so they were brought in. "And the king spake, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and show me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom." Why the third ruler? Because Belshazzar was the second ruler. His father was in reality the king, but he was not in Babylon at that moment, and Belshazzar was in joint kingship with him.

The king got no help from his wise men. "Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof" (ver. 8). A spirit of deep sleep was on them; every eye seemed closed to the truth, and the offer of the highest reward produced no effect. "Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished" (ver. 9). Tremendous was the effect made upon this godless man. We rejoice when sinners are impressed, aroused, troubled, and yet more deeply troubled. The devil, however, is always keen and anxious to get these impressions removed, and in the case before us, I do not think the effect was long-lasting. It is fear, not of God, but of the consequences of sin, that sometimes affects men in this way—fear produced on a deathbed—pure fear of hell, and damnation.

But, you say, some men turn to the Lord on their deathbed. I do not deny it. But who gives you the assurance that after you have spent your life in the service of sin, and after you have lived only for this

world, to the utter neglect of eternity, that you will be able to turn to the Lord at the twelfth hour, and have all settled up. Take warning, Belshazzar died that night, and you may die this night.

At this juncture, in the midst of the still increasing alarm of the king, and the bewilderment of his lords, a friend comes into the banqueting-hall in the person of the queen (the queen-mother most probably, see vers. 2 and 10). She had evidently taken no part in the feast, but "by reason of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banquet-house." Clearly she kept aloof from this scene of sacrilege and devilry. She was outside it, and there was one more outside than herself, the man of whom she can now speak. She comes and says to the king in ver. 10, "O king, *live for ever.*" What a delusive wish! Poor man, he died that night. And you, my friend, may not have many hours before you. Death, that terrible archer, has his arrow fitted to the bow to-night, and ere the morning that arrow may have sped its way, found a target in thy heart, and the morning light may find thee gone.

But three days have rolled away, since a young man came to my house, in hot haste, and said, "Can you come, and see my father at once." I went, and saw him. He had been ill but a few days. I found the mark of death on the old man's face, and they asked me how long he would live. "Twenty-four hours at the longest," was all I could say. He was dead in eighteen hours, but, thank God, he was a believer and went to glory. Friend, if you die now in your sins, you will go down into eternal judgment, spite of some friend whispering to you, "Live for ever." Belshazzar died that night. Does he live for

ever? He *exists* for ever, but we have no reason whatever to think that Belshazzar was a saved man. I believe he earned his bed in hell, and went there. He was awakened, and he was impressed, but he was not converted. I will prove that shortly.

The queen-mother now tries to calm her son's anxiety—just as the devil would calm an awakened sinner to-day. She says: "Let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed: there is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father (or grandfather) light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and showing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation. Then was Daniel brought in before the king. And the king spake, and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry? I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom, is found in thee. And now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not show the interpretation of the thing: and I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writ-

ing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom" (vers. 11-16).

Evidently Belshazzar knew nothing about Daniel. He had quite forgotten, even if he had ever heard that Nebuchadnezzar, his grandfather, had exalted him to the place next himself; and placed him as "ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon. . . . Daniel sat in the gate of the king" (chap. ii. 48, 49). Godless men do not like, and usually do not know godly men. Godless men are not in touch with godly men; and therefore Belshazzar, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, did not know the man whom his grandfather had placed at the head of affairs only a few years before. This fact speaks volumes as to Belshazzar. Great as might be the pride of Nebuchadnezzar, he had recognised the moral worth of the captive Daniel, as his exaltation to be second ruler in the kingdom showed, but his depraved grandson had ignored his very existence. But Daniel was there all the time, separate, devoted to God, having His mind, and ready to reveal it at the fitting moment.

This scene has been often repeated in the history of the souls of men. When eternity confronts an ungodly man, he resorts to the godly man, for light, help, and comfort if possible. This proves that godliness is profitable in this life, and in the one to come. Depend upon it, the godly man has the best of it. It is very likely, my unsaved friend, you live quite close to a godly man, one who could help you to apprehend the truth, and yet you know nothing about him really. You give him a wide berth, close quarters is the very

thing you avoid. You will want him yet, that God-fearing, holy, separate man, who lives for Christ, and labours to present Him to needy souls, and win weary hearts for Him. The careless sinner does not like such neighbours. But what a wonderful thing it is that God has His witnesses even in Babylon. You should thank God if He has put one of His servants near you, who will speak faithfully, and tell you the truth plainly.

Such was Daniel, and the dissolute king had to admit it as he says: "I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee. . . . And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts." Yes, the truth of God is unveiled by the servants of God. He reveals, and they proclaim the truth. You need not have the slightest doubt of your bourne, my unsaved friend: it is an absolutely divine certainty that unless you become converted to God, and washed in the precious blood of Jesus, that you are bound for the lake of fire. I said this to a man lately who sent for me. It was the old story. His heated face, and dirty tongue, told me that long and deep potations of whisky had brought him once more to his bed. I said: "You have only just to go on as you are going to land in hell for ever. You do not need to move an eyelid, just go on as you are going." "I do not want to go there," he replied. Probably you do not want to go there either, but it is well that you should know that you do not need to sin extraordinarily, or commit some terrible evil to find yourself there. You are perhaps a moral, respectable, outwardly religious, Bible-reading man or woman, but if you are not converted, if you are not

born of God, you need have no doubt whatever that you are on the direct road thither. You must go through the new birth to escape it. The scripture dissolves every doubt on that point: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

The man who dissolves doubts is now before the king, who offers him all manner of rewards, saying, "Now, if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom." Daniel replies as becomes the occasion: "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation." But before doing so he gives the king a most solemn and bitter admonition, as he briefly recounts Nebuchadnezzar's history, and God's dealings with him, and then charges home on his conscience the gravity of his own indifference on the one hand, and his reckless insults against God on the other.

He says to Belshazzar: "O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour: and for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down." (Thus God gave his grandfather universal power.) "But when his heart was lifted up" (that is always the way when men get power, their hearts are lifted up), "and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him." (Chap. iv. of this book tells us of the incident where

his reason, clearly for the time being, is taken away.) "And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will" (vers. 18-21). Nebuchadnezzar had to take his place amongst the beasts of the field. These have no idea of God. Man has, for he has a conscience in him. The great difference between a man and a beast is that the former recognises God, the latter does not, but "man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish" (Ps. xlix. 20). The unconverted man does not know Him; be he ever so learned or intelligent, he has no true knowledge of God. Nebuchadnezzar, as his term of judgment expires, lifts up his eyes to heaven. His intelligence is returning. A beast looks down, never up, in a moral sense. Man, if conscious of his relationship to God, as a creature looks up to the One from whom he derives all. By this painful process Nebuchadnezzar learned to know the most high God. He got to know His supremacy.

And you too, my friend, have to learn the supremacy of the most high God, and woe betide the man that sets himself up against God. He will yet learn by bitter experience that the most high God rules in the kingdom of men. Belshazzar knew all that, and what effect had it upon him? "And thou his son, O Belshazzar, *hast not humbled thine heart*, though thou knewest all this. But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy

lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified" (vers. 22, 23).

What a solemn indictment! And possibly you exclaim, What a fool was this besotted monarch to be thus guilty of such open impiety, as regards God, and to be given up to idolatry! Yes, he was worshipping gods who neither saw nor knew; but whom do you worship? You say, I go to church. Granted, but whom do you worship? Who is your God? I should not wonder if bank-notes were among the gods which you worship. They govern you, and whatever governs a man is really his god. Not forty-eight hours ago, at a dispensary, a young man told me that he was a "bookmaker." "A poor business," I remarked; "do you make money?" "Sometimes." "And when you do not, you work, I suppose." "Oh, no, I go to drink." "And you are very happy?" Happy! His face was a picture of misery. No! he was wretched. "Have you a mother?" "Yes." "Have you seen her lately?" "Not for over two years." "Have you written to her?" "No." "Broken her heart?" "Yes, I believe I have." "Man," said I, "get to the Lord, get your soul saved, and then go and bind up your mother's broken heart."

Do you think money-making means happiness? Never! Money was this youth's god. And it may be yours—gods of gold—or silver even. Perhaps yours is a pleasure god. Others with their whole heart and soul live for music. They have a musical god. Possibly whisky is your god. God save you

from it. Ah! Belshazzar was not the only man that bowed down to idols.

Now, mark, behind all these varied idols stands he who is the god of this world—Satan. The man who is doing his own will is simply doing Satan's, and is in his service. Liberty, without God, is only to do the devil's will, and his work, and in the contempt which you in your way, and Belshazzar in his, have shown for God, the working not of your mind but of Satan's is manifest. But the king had willingly yielded himself to be the devil's tool, so that a controversy between him and God existed, hence he hears from Daniel's lips, "And the God in whose hand thy breath is" (mark that), "and whose are all thy ways, *hast thou not glorified.*" A solemn, a grave charge, but absolutely true. My friend, is this true of you too? Take care. God gives you your warning to-night. It may be your last one. "Thy breath" too is in His hand. The little string of life has but to be broken, and you pass from time into eternity. I repeat God is warning you, and giving you an opportunity to-night to get right with Him. Embrace it.

There was a man who sat in this hall once, twice, and thrice, hearing the gospel. On the first occasion I happened to meet him at the door, as he left, and spoke to him about his soul's salvation. He replied, "I am not going in for this sort of thing just yet." I met him another night, and he said, "It will be all right, let me go, do not be put about on my account; I do not mind hearing you preach," and he departed. I saw him the third night. He came each time with a godly coachman whom I knew. Again I asked him if he were decided for Christ, but he said, "It will be all right yet; good-night, sir." I did not see him

again, and some months after, meeting the coachman who had brought him, I asked if he were yet unsaved. "Have you not heard what happened to him?" was the reply. "No," I said; "what has happened?" "Do you not remember he was here one Sunday, and you spoke to him? Well, the next day while driving his master, the horses slipped, and pulled him off the driving box. He fell, striking his head on the curb stone, was stunned, and carried to the Infirmary. He never spoke again, and died within forty-eight hours." God had given that man his warning. I fear he heeded it not. Be wiser than he, for "the God in whose hand thy breath is" may cut you off as suddenly. You had better bow at once and let Jesus save you.

But what about this writing that king Belshazzar saw? Daniel now says to the king, "Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN." And what did these words mean? They were only four Chaldean words, and at least one was repeated twice. MENE, meant numbered. The king knew the word meant numbered, and that TEKEL meant weighed, and UPHARSIN divided. Yes, numbered, weighed, and divided. What has that to do with me? the king might have said. He was soon told. "This is the interpretation of the thing: "MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it." Your history is over. You have got to the full length of your tether. God has numbered thy kingdom on earth, and finished it. Belshazzar heard this, but I do not think he believed it.

"TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." That was true of Belshazzar, and it is true of you and me too, my friend. It is true of

every one. Only One there is of whom it was not true, and that was the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. He was put into God's balances and was found full weight. The Holy One—the true One—the devoted One—the One, who loved God with His whole heart, and soul and mind, the man Christ Jesus has been put in the balances, and has been found full weight. You and I have been found wanting. The things that we ought to have done, we have left undone, and the things we ought not to have done, we have done. That is man.

If that be the case—and you have found it out—what is to be done? You will need to repudiate your own works and rest on Christ. I have found a substitute—the blessed Saviour, who died for me—who gave Himself for my sins. What a wonderful thing it is to know Christ as your Saviour, and find all you need in Him.

Last of all, Belshazzar hears this: "PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." At that very moment the Medes and the Persians were besieging Babylon. History lets us know that for a very long time they had been beleaguering the city, which rested in its fancied security. The king thought it could not be taken. But God had prophesied its fall, and now announces the fact. And what takes place? Does Belshazzar bow down in repentance? Alas, no! When he hears the interpretation of the writing, we read, "Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom" (ver. 29). He has been saying that my kingdom is coming to an end, says the king, but I do not believe it. I do not believe my kingdom

is over. Blow the trumpet, and put a gold chain round Daniel's neck, and proclaim that I determine that he shall be the next man to me in the kingdom—my kingdom is still to go on. So thought he, and therefore so he acted. But we read, "In that night was Belshazzar king of the Chaldeans slain" (ver. 30). Did I not say that I judged he was not converted? I did. The man was clearly infidel, spite of the plain warning he had, and the testimony of God in the writing on the wall. And how many men are infidel in this hall to-night? The proof of his infidelity was this. He proclaimed that Daniel was to be the third ruler in the kingdom, though he had just heard that his kingdom was finished. He did not believe it. But it came true. How did it come about?

History tells us that Babylon's walls had at intervals lofty towers to the number of two hundred and fifty, whence the Chaldeans could watch their foe, and from these towers they saw no evidence of danger. The foe outside, however, had done a very simple thing. The river Euphrates, as we have already seen, ran right through the centre of the city, guarded by great brazen gates, so that no one could get into it by water. It was a very simple little artifice that Cyrus, the Persian leader, adopted. The Euphrates makes a bend near Babylon, so Cyrus cut a new bed for the waters a few miles up, and diverted their course. He made an immense canal forming the chord of the bend. When darkness had come on the sluices were opened, and the river turned into this new direction. As a consequence the bed of the river was practically dry as far as regards Babylon. The Persian troops marched quietly along that bed, and under the brazen gates, and got possession of the city. Then

was fulfilled what Jeremiah has told us, a messenger ran "to show the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end" (Jer. li. 31). In the midst of this feast, which was the object of admiration of everybody who was careless and heedless, the hosts of the foe came in, and the news reached the king that his city was taken, and immediately the feast was broken up. "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain." His bloody corpse, on the very floor of the banqueting house, should be a warning note to every sinner in this hall to-night not to despise the message of God.

Unconverted one, could Belshazzar speak to-night, I know what he would say: "Men and women of Edinburgh, do not trifle with God. Sinners of Edinburgh, do not disregard the warning of God. I did. I was a fool for my pains. He warned me. I believed Him not, nor heeded Him; and I died that night in my unbelief." I believe he was damned. I know that you will be too, if you do not turn to God. God is giving you your warning, my friend. Let me implore you to accept it, and turn to the Lord this night, for "he, that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Prov. xxix. 1).

Where will you spend eternity?
This question comes to you and me!
Tell me, what shall your answer be—
Where will you spend eternity?
Eternity! eternity!
Where will you spend eternity?

CHAPTER XIV.

A Night among Lions.

DEVOTION.

DAN. vi.

IT would in no wise surprise me if some of you were to say, That is a curious scripture to select, in order to proclaim the gospel. Well, I will not quarrel with your criticism, but will read you one verse of Scripture from the New Testament, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Rom. xv. 4), for I am certain that the sixth of Daniel is no exception to the application of that remarkable scripture.

The Bible is like no other book. It has unspeakable wealth, not only of information, but of light and blessing from God. Although this chapter does not contain much statement of the gospel, I do not know an Old Testament scripture that confirms more blessedly and really the faith and confidence of the heart that believes in God than does this sixth of Daniel, because it shows me what the effect is in the soul, of the word of God, and of having to do only with God. And what is that effect? This—It makes it absolutely fearless in the presence of men.

Daniel was a man of God without doubt. He was

at this time, I take it, becoming an old man. But he was a man who clung to God, who loved Him, honoured Him, and obeyed Him; and who, in the face of that which was most terrible to the human mind to contemplate, felt that to cleave to, and implicitly obey the Lord, was his safe path in spite of all consequences. If you are a Christian, I think you will agree with me that Daniel's judgment was a right one; and if you are not a Christian, and have never known the blessedness of having to do with God, I trust that by His grace you will be led into contact with the living God just now.

Daniel knew the living God. He was in touch with the living God. Are you? It was a fine testimony that Darius sent out to all his subjects: "He is the living God, and steadfast for ever" (Dan. vi. 26). Thank God He is. It is a good thing to know the living One in a world of death. "The *living* God." Charming expression! Lovely epithet applied to God. If you have never yet been brought into contact with the living God, may His Spirit bring you in contact with Himself now; because, if not, you are still dead in your sins, a sinner on your road to eternal judgment. Oh, my friend, note this well, that the source of blessing for you and for me even as for Daniel, was and is "the living God." The scripture before us is very interesting, not only as a matter of history, but because I have no doubt God gives us this narrative for the special purpose of throwing light upon the day in which you and I live. I do not know whether you are accustomed to read Old Testament Scripture in that way. If not, I commend it to you. We should seek to learn what God means by recording certain things. They are not merely matters of

history, but He records them as pictorial views of what His purposes and plans are, showing on the one hand the folly and sin of man, as in Daniel v., and on the other, how God steps in to carry out His own purposes.

Now this sixth chapter of Daniel must be read with the fifth, and I may add that the third and fourth go with them also. In the third you get the story of Nebuchadnezzar putting up his golden image, and compelling men to bow down to it; the civil power is there seen compelling men to forswear God. There were several faithful, godly men—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego—who would not bow down to the idol. What is the result? They are cast into the burning, fiery furnace. And what does the fire do for them? It burns off all their bonds, sets them free, and puts them into the company of the Son of God. There they are in liberty. God takes care of them.

In the next chapter, the fourth, a very striking scripture, Nebuchadnezzar's self-exaltation and pride are seen rising to a fearful height. What do I find then? God steps in, and Nebuchadnezzar is reduced to the level of the beast. He says as he walks in his palace, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (iv. 30.) His thought is, I have done all this, and then there comes a voice from heaven saying, "The kingdom is departed from thee; and they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field" (vers. 32, 33), *i.e.*, he is reduced to the level of a beast.

You must bear in mind that the Book of Daniel unfolds "the times of the Gentiles," a period in which

God allows the civil power to fall into the hands of the Gentiles; and I have no doubt, therefore, that in the two chapters I have already alluded to, and in the fifth and sixth also, God is giving us a sort of picture of what the pride and folly of the Gentiles will lead them to. In chap. iii. you have Nebuchadnezzar setting up the idol; in the fourth he exalts himself, but God abases him. The fifth chapter is the scene of Belshazzar's impiety and sacrilege in bringing in the vessels of the Lord, and drinking out of them—a most daring insult to Jehovah. What is the result? Belshazzar is judged. In the chapter before us this evening (the sixth), another man exalts himself, and takes the place of God. Now the picture is complete. The third chapter gives us idolatry; the fourth, self-exaltation; the fifth, impiety; and the sixth apostasy.

I quite admit that Darius, who comes before us in chap. vi., did not take the initiative in his folly. His courtiers laid a trap for him, as they presented to him the very pleasing idea that he should be the one object of petition and worship. It was so pleasing to his vanity that he dropped into the trap. That is a picture of what will happen by-and-by, a foreshadowing of "the man of sin," spoken of in the second chapter of 2nd Thessalonians, and the twelfth and thirteenth chapters of Revelation, who exalts himself, and takes the place of God. God has given us these pictures in the Old Testament just to interest us Christians in His Word.

I can only give you the bare outlines of the subject, but you can easily trace it out for yourselves in Scripture. There can be no doubt there is here a picture of what will come by-and-by. You will find Babylon is judged in the eighteenth chapter of the

Book of Revelation, and the next thing is that "the beast"—the creature of Satan's choice and his helper—is judged too. By-and-by the judgment of God will come upon this scene of darkness and sin, when the Church has been taken away, and when the Holy Ghost is gone also. Then the world that bears the name of Christ—Christendom so-called—a scene of profession, but really without Christ, and without the Holy Ghost, will be judged of God. The first thing will be this—the beast who destroys the woman, the whore (Rev. xvii. 16-18), is glad to get rid of everything that pertains to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ outwardly. The next thing is that this ravening beast is judged by the Lord Jesus Christ in the moment of His coming. Enough of that, however. I merely allude to it to help the Christian in the study of the Word of God.

Let us now look at the details of this interesting chapter, in connection with Daniel, and we shall find much to comfort and help our hearts, as believers in the Lord, and much to encourage those who may not yet be on the Lord's side to take their place there. Daniel had a position of authority in the kingdom of Darius. The king had recognised his worth, and had given him the highest position among the three presidents. "This Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him: and the king thought to set him over the whole realm" (ver. 3). Further, Daniel was a godly man, but the world, in its wickedness and corruption, does not love godly men. There is no doubt about that. If you want to get a proof of it, go and read the ninth Psalm. You will there see how the world uses the godly. The wicked hate the godly.

Enraged at Daniel's preferment, the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel, but could not do so, "forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him" (ver. 4). Doubtless jealousy made the princes and authorities in the kingdom seek occasion against Daniel. It was the absence of pride in him that led to his exaltation, for we have seen that he was "preferred above the presidents and princes, because *an excellent spirit was in him;* and the king thought to set him over the whole realm." Evidently he had gained greatly in the estimation of the king. His behaviour and walk were so beautiful—so spotless, in that sense—and the man had such a knowledge of the mind of God, that he was put a second time in Babylon in the remarkable position of being second only to the king himself. First under Nebuchadnezzar, now under Darius. Two dynasties exalted him.

This roused the enmity of the presidents and princes, and they "sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him." What a fine thing to have recorded about a servant of God! My dear friends, were the Lord to write our lives, could He say the same about us? Could God put down that there was no possibility of finding fault with us? Remarkable words: "They could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him." He was blameless. I have no doubt his enemies looked at him from every point of view, in relation to the king, and to the government of the kingdom, and they did their best to find some fault with his services, or some

blot in his character, and daily walk, but they could not.

He himself is able to say presently to the king that he had done him no damage. Lower down in the chapter, in view of God, he says, "Forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt" (ver. 22). It reminds one of the apostle Paul when he says to his accusers, "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and *toward* men" (Acts xxiv. 16). That is what all Christians should do. And how do you get and keep a conscience void of offence toward God? It is got first of all by being washed in the blood of the Lamb, and it is kept by walking in dependence on, and obedience to God. Young Christian, you get your conscience purged by the blood of Jesus. But you say, How can I keep a good conscience? By being exercised. You are exercised in your soul, and always have God in view, that is to say, you labour so to walk that God will not be able to say, "That was wrong"; and that no man shall be able to say, "That was wrong." This was Paul's manner of walk.

Daniel walked, evidently, on identically the same lines. What God thought of him is manifest. What the people of the world thought of him is beautiful. I feel rebuked in reading this scripture, and I do not believe there is a Christian here to-night, but is also rebuked as he reads the account of this man's life. He was a saint, and he was in a very difficult position. He had a high place in the world, and the higher the place you have in this world, the more are you in a certain sense under its power. The more I am receiving from the world—in the ordinary sense of the word,

I may say—in the same proportion do I come under its power, unless my eye is kept fixed on the Lord distinctly and constantly. That Daniel's eye was on the Lord, is very certain, and therefore the Lord supported him, to the confusion of those who plotted for his downfall.

Satan always defeats himself in the end, and so do Daniel's foes, as they commence to dig a pit for him, into which, however, they fall, and not he. "Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him, concerning the law of his God." We cannot find fault with his practical life, but we will trip him up on the ground of his religion. Once determined to get hold of him in that way, they band all together, and go to King Darius and request him "to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions" (ver. 7). They come to the king with this remarkable petition. No doubt it played upon the king's vanity, and he gives his consent. He dropped into the trap that Satan laid for him too, namely, the usurpation of the place of God. It was apostasy in its very worst form; because, you see, he was dethroning God. The request granted, the courtiers further say: "Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree."

It was well known that a decree so brought out would be enforced, and the people knew full well that any one who addressed a prayer to any person but the king for thirty days would be cast headlong into the

den of lions. Now look at the man of faith. "When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and *his windows being open* in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, *as he did aforetime*" (ver. 10). That is very charming. The Holy Ghost distinctly states that Daniel did not act ignorantly. At the time he bowed in prayer before God he knew about the decree. He knew the alternatives. He knew he would have to obey the decree, or be cast into the den of lions, and I have no doubt he looked well at the consequences of his actions. Ah, how many a man has been turned back from following the truth because of his fear of the consequences.

There is many a young man in this hall to-night who has never yet come out boldly on the Lord's side. Do you know why? He was afraid of the consequences. He knew he would be laughed at, and jeered at, by his godless companions. He was afraid of the consequences. Ah! there has many a soul gone into eternal fire, I am certain, just because he feared the consequences of confessing Christ. Is there such a timid soul before me now? Look at this man. His action is most cheering, and most encouraging. "When Daniel *knew* that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and *his windows being open* . . . he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and *prayed, and gave thanks.*" Well done, Daniel! What would nineteenth-century timidity have done? It would have drawn down the blinds, and said, Do not pray there, Daniel, where everybody will have the chance of looking at you. You might certainly shut the shutters, or draw the blinds. No. Daniel would

not have that. Listen! It is pointedly remarked that he prayed, "*his windows being open* in his chamber *towards Jerusalem.*

You know, I suppose, why he prayed that way? Daniel was a firm believer in the Word of God. Now the man that is a firm believer in the Word of God gets his soul saved to begin with, and then gets guided by the Word of God all along his path afterwards; for remember, the Word of God is not only for your blessing, and to tell you of your salvation at the start, but it is for your direction and comfort ever after. What was it then that led Daniel to fling his windows open, and pray in the direction of Jerusalem? If you will turn to 2nd Chronicles, and the sixth chapter, you will see that he was acting on Scripture. When Solomon dedicates the temple to God, he turns in prayer to the Lord, and says with regard to God's people, "If they sin against thee (for *there is* no man which sinneth not)"—you mark that, friend, "there is no man that sinneth not," and sin bears terrible consequences, for the wages of sin is death, and after death the judgment—"and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before *their* enemies, and they carry them away captives into a land far off or near; yet if they bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn and pray unto thee in the land of their captivity, saying, We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly; if they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captives, and *pray toward their land*, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and *toward the city which thou hast chosen*, and *toward the house which I have built for thy name:* then hear thou

from the heavens, even from thy dwelling-place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee" (2 Chron. vi. 36-39). Daniel knew that prayer by heart. A captive in the land of captivity, he recollected it. You will find in the ninth chapter of his book that he confessed his sin, and the sin of Israel, but that is not mentioned here. All that is recorded here is that he went into his house, and "his windows being open," he prayed "towards Jerusalem."

What would the half-heartedness of the present day have suggested? It will do just as well, Daniel, to go into a back room where no one will see you. God will hear you just as well in a back room as in the front. Ah, no, Daniel says, I must look towards the land, towards the city, and towards the house of God, no matter who sees me. Where was he? In Babylon. He could not see Jerusalem, but he looked towards it. He had God's authority to look towards *His* house, and that he must do, no matter what the consequences might be. Well done, Daniel! What a lesson for us! I have no doubt he knew that he would be seen, but he said: I cannot help that. I cannot pray in any other direction than towards the city, if I am to expect an answer to my prayers, and I am not going to swerve, or budge one single inch from the word of God, for all the decrees of man, let the consequences be what they may.

So Daniel went and "kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, *as he did aforetime*." Mark that little word—"as he did aforetime." It is very beautiful. He was not driven to his knees by the emergency, nor was he

driven from being a prayerful man, just because it was a moment of intense difficulty, and a great crisis in his history. That resolute man was absolutely immovable. He was "like a marble statue," so to speak, "in the pathway of obedience" and fealty to God. He would not move an inch. Prayer to God was an integral part of Daniel's life; to forego it would have been wrong, and to pray to Darius would have been worse still, as it would have been to render to the creature what the Creator alone can claim. On the other hand, to disobey the king meant being cast into the den of lions. Make your choice, they said to Daniel; bow to Darius, or go to the den of lions.

To-day also men must make their choice. You must either bow to the Lord Jesus Christ and receive eternal salvation, or face the judgment of God. I cannot press too strongly upon you the fact of the coming judgment of God. If you are wise you will escape from it. Forget not that "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God" (Ps. ix. 17). God says it. Again, it is written, "It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark ix. 43, 44). It was the Lord Jesus Christ who said this. Of unbelievers it is also written, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment" (Matt. xxv. 46). It was the Saviour, who died on the tree for sinners, who spoke these words. God knows what is coming, and He has told us, my friends, exactly what it is, that we may be warned, and escape it. But more, He has told us of something that has come, and what is that? Salvation! A Saviour! A day of judgment and a day of

wrath is coming, but a Saviour has come, and you may have that Saviour.

In Daniel's day the alternative was this, Bow to Darius, or be thrown into the den of lions. Well, says Daniel, I can only bow to God, and if I must go to the den of lions, He can deliver me out of it if He will. And so he prayed, while his enemies "assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication to his God" (ver. 4). Of course they knew his habits and ways, and we can well imagine the glee that filled this crew of would-be murderers, as they gathered round the house of the godly man. Ah! there he is, on his knees, morning, noon, and evening, turning to God. I do not say to you that you should pray three times a day. The Holy Ghost has said to us, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. v. 17). And what does that mean? "Pray without ceasing" just means what it says. There was a great conclave of ministers who met once, and began to discuss that scripture. One thought that three times a day like Daniel was sufficient, and others thought something else. One of the company was leaving, and meeting old Betty, who kept the meeting-house, said to her, "We have been discussing that scripture, 'Pray without ceasing.'" "And what do you make of it?" said the old woman. "It is a little uncertain," replied the preacher. "It seems very easy to explain," says Betty. "How?" "Well, it just means what it says. When I get up in the morning, the first thing I do is to wash my face, and I pray God that many sinners may be washed in the blood of Christ during the day. Then I put on my clothes, and I pray God to clothe me with Christ and with humility. Then when I take up my broom, and begin to brush out the room, I think of the woman

who swept the house for the lost piece of silver, and I pray to God to sweep the world, and to save lost sinners. Then when I come to brush the grate, and it begins to brighten up, I pray to the Lord to brighten up my soul, and to brighten up my faith during the day." And so Betty went on mentioning certain things during the day as providing an opportunity of approaching God in prayer. Well done, Betty! She had the sense of what it was to get to God in prayer about everything, and I believe that is exactly what you find in the history of the soul of every one who becomes a true Christian. He is constantly turning every occasion into an opportunity of approaching God in prayer.

Daniel is seen praying, and I can understand how delighted his enemies are to see him. His condemnation is now certain. They go to the king, and put him in memory of the edict, and then they gleefully add, "That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day" (ver. 13). The world was witness to his resolute godliness. And it is a happy thing if the world has the same thing to say about your habits and mine. "Then the king, when he heard *these* words, was sore displeased with himself, and set *his* heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him" (ver. 14). But no, he could not do it. The laws of the Medes and Persians were unalterable. The consequence was they had to be carried out. To ensure this the men came to the king again in the evening saying, "Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may

be changed" (ver. 15). They were determined that Daniel should spend that night in the lions' den; but I am bound to say, he never had a happier night in his life. Why? Because he was in the path of duty and of obedience; and the Lord stood by him in a marvellous manner.

"Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast *him* into the den of lions" (ver. 16). I think I see that scene as the praying man of God is laid hold of, the gates are opened, and he is cast into the lions' den. Well might his heart naturally have been afraid. But no. The fear of God was in it instead. He had walked with the living God for many a long year, and of one thing I am certain, that the living God walked with him to the mouth of the den that day. He went in, and then the king said to Daniel, "Thy God, whom thou servest continually, *he will deliver thee*" (ver. 16). That was a splendid word for him to hear as the stone was being rolled to the mouth of the den. "Thy God, whom *thou servest continually*, he will deliver thee." What a fine character was Daniel's, and what a fine testimony this to his service for the Lord, "whom thou servest continually." And what a cheering word to his heart, "He will deliver thee." I think, whatever fears might have passed through Daniel's mind before, they would disappear after these words, although we immediately read that "a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel" (ver. 17).

The decree executed, darkness reigned, but the king passed a very sad night. I am pretty certain that of

the two men, that night, Daniel was far better off than Darius. The king fasted all night. He went supperless to bed, and slept not. His instruments of music were not brought. He could not sleep, so he "arose very early in the morning, and went in haste to the den of lions." Now, my friends, let us picture this real bit of history for a moment. Let us put ourselves in Daniel's place, so to speak, as he is thrown into the den of lions. There he is, a feeble and aged man; and he is surrounded by lions, mighty and hungry, greedy of prey, the kings of beasts, the most powerful of them. What chance has he against them? He is their appointed prey just because he is full of devotion to God. Escape seems impossible. But Daniel is a man of faith as well as of prayer, and God always rewards and answers faith. He is pleased by it, as well as by obedience. Daniel has gone in alone with God. Lions may be there, but he thinks not of them, nor fears, nor regards them. He spends that night not in the company of lions, but really alone with God, and I repeat, he is happier far than Darius. Darius has had a wretched night, Daniel a happy one. Hence we can well understand that the king in the morning cries with a lamentable voice unto Daniel. He has lost his faith in God during the night, because he says, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, *is thy God*, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" The night before he said, "Thy God will deliver thee." In the morning he is not quite sure. It is a bad thing not to have certain confidence in the living God. "Is thy God able to deliver thee from the lions?"

Now, mark Daniel's answer. "Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. My God hath

sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me." Beloved friend, can you say, like Daniel, "My God"? If you do not learn to say "My God" on earth, you will never learn to say it in eternity. Then out of the depths of eternal sorrow and misery there may come from your lips a most bitter cry, but it will have this prefix, "O God!" You will never say "My God" in hell. Never! Why not learn to say "My God" now? Who says that to-night? Who turns to-night to speak to the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and can truthfully use that expression? When I say "my," it means something I possess—some one I know. I possess Him—my God. And how can I be sure that God is my God? The Lord Jesus Christ, who had no sin, when on the cross bearing our sins and the judgment of God, at length cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" That language of Jesus was the expression of the sense He had of the utter and profound abandonment of God as He was drinking the cup of judgment due to sinners, that you and I might have life eternal. He was forsaken that you and I might be accepted. Standing on the ground of the redemption which He accomplished, may you be able henceforth to say, "My God!"

You have been on the world's side hitherto. Be on the Lord's side from now. You have been on the devil's side till now; you have served Satan, sin, and lust till this hour. Oh, turn to God now. What a wonderful thing it is that the man who turns to Him can truly say, "My God." Paul could say, "My God" (Phil. iv. 19). The possession of God is a wonderful thing. The mere profession of Christianity is a poor thing, but the possession of the knowledge of God as

your Father is a wonderful thing. God loves to hear the man who has come back confessing his sin, saying, not only "My God," but He loves to hear him say, like the prodigal, "My Father." He loves to hear the voice of the returning prodigals, and He ever runs to meet and bless them.

It was with gladsome voice that Daniel replies to the king, saying, "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me." What transpired throughout that night Scripture has flung a veil over. We are only told that God's angel was there—no doubt a visible manifestation from God—and that the lions' mouths were shut. Daniel's mouth is opened in praise and thankfulness as he now confesses what God has done. The reason of God's intervention Daniel now adds: "Forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt" (ver. 22). He simply states what his walk before God had been, and what his conduct had been in relation to the king. "Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him." Why? "*Because he believed in his God*" (ver. 23). Do you believe in God? If you are a believer in God, you are sure to be blessed.

It is important to bear in mind that God does not always relieve His children from the consequences of the confession of the name of His Son. It is not always God's way so to do. But it is very encouraging to see how He sustains and miraculously delivers His beloved servant at this point, "because he believed in his God." Can it be said of you that you believe

in God? "Abraham believed God." Do you? Paul says, "I believe God." Friend, do you? If you believe God, you pass from death to life. Have you learned to lay hold of the living God, who raised up His Son from the dead when He had died for sinners? If so, life is yours, and peace and joy are yours. Nay, more, righteousness is yours, on the same ground as Abraham got it. He believed God, "and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Faith in God secures untold blessing to the believing soul.

Daniel's faith brings God's deliverance, and he is taken up out of the lions' den unhurt. Then we find that judgment falls upon his foes (ver. 24), and the final result of Daniel's devotion to God is beautiful. Darius sends out a remarkable edict. It is a proclamation of wonderful import. Darius had gained a certain definite knowledge of God from Daniel's faithfulness. Up to this time he had no real knowledge of Him. It is amazing what the effect of faithfulness is. There is always a charming effect where the soul witnesses for the Lord—where it stands boldly, and openly confesses the Lord. Confession is an immense thing, and I am certain that there are many souls to-day, some perhaps in this hall to-night, who, while converted to the truth of the gospel, have never taken their stand for the Lord. They have not

openly and markedly taken up their position on the Lord's side. They are afraid—afraid of the consequences. But look at the consequences of this man's boldness, simple faith, and fidelity to God. Not only did God deliver him, but Darius through him learned the knowledge of God, and sent out an edict which I wish you would read: "Unto all people, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel." Have you obeyed that decree? Ah! you say, I am not living in Darius' day. I know it. Darius has long since gone to his account, but I will tell you this, if you have never trembled and feared before the God of Daniel, you will be in that condition one day, and it will be too late then to learn what Darius adds: "He is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion *shall be even* unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions" (vers. 25-27). Ah! there is God's title, He saves and rescues. What kind of God is my God? A saviour God. What kind of God was Daniel's God. A saviour God.

That is the title God takes now in the gospel. I quite admit that Darius meant the rescuing and delivering of the body, but it is equally, yea, more true, in regard to the soul. God is the saviour of His people. He is the living God. Have you turned to Him? Paul writes to the Thessalonians reminding them thus, "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God" (1 Thess. i. 9). "The living

and true God" is a charming expression. That is His title, and His character. What an immense thing it is in a world of sin, sorrow, death, and unreality, to know the living and true God. Well might Darius say, I will make this decree, "That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for he is the living God, and steadfast for ever." He never changes. He saves sinners. He upholds His saints. He comforts, strengthens, and blesses them, and the result of their testimony is this that His glory is spread abroad. "He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions." Overnight Darius said, God will deliver. In the morning he asks, Did He do it? God did it. And then Darius sends out a decree, I want everybody to know Daniel's God, who has done it.

And now, my friend, I want you to know "My God," Daniel's God. I can assure you of blessing if you have made up your mind to belong to Jesus. Never mind the consequences. Perhaps you say, If I were to yield my heart to Him there may be serious consequences. I will tell you the consequences. You will be saved. You will get your sins forgiven. You will be justified by faith in Christ. You will have your sins washed away in the precious blood of Christ. Blessed consequences! Happy consequences! Then, on believing, the Holy Ghost will fill your heart with peace and joy, which will become deeper and deeper as you go outside and confess Christ. Confession is laid upon you as a privilege and a duty. It is coupled with salvation. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead,

thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness ; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation " (Rom. x. 9, 10).

You take your stand in the world for the living God, who has saved you, and forgiven you your sins. Confess Him, and He will maintain you : be sure of this. What would be the result of your confession ? Somebody else would get converted through you. I doubt not the effect of the edict was great on those who heard it, because the truth of God always works, and God always blesses faithfulness. God give you and me grace to be faithful, and to be witnesses for the light, and to stand up for the Lord in the little circle where God has put us. God give you grace to be decidedly and distinctly for Christ ; and you will exclaim, like Paul, " We may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb. xiii. 6). Faithfulness is always rewarded; obedience and dependence delight God, and the path of true blessing for the Christian is always that of DEVOTION.

O Jesus, I have purposed
To serve Thee to the end ;
Be Thou for ever near me,
My Master and my Friend ;
I shall not fear the battle
If Thou art by my side,
Nor wander from the pathway
If Thou wilt be my Guide.

O Jesus, Thou hast promised
To all who follow Thee,
That where Thou art in glory
There shall Thy servant be ;
And, Jesus, I have purposed
To serve Thee to the end ;
O give me grace to follow
My Master and my Friend.

CHAPTER XV.

A Night in a Counting-House.

MISCALCULATION.

Luke xii. 13-21; Acts ii. 37.

THE scripture in which this passage occurs, which I have now read to you from Luke xii., is a very remarkable and a very blessed one. The Lord has gathered round about Himself a large company, and is unfolding principles of immense value to His own people. He is telling them what would be the effect of His going away. The loss of His presence as a living Messiah here upon the earth would very likely be this, that those who followed Him would get into trouble and persecution. But He encourages them. He warns them against hypocrisy, covetousness, and carefulness. He cures these evils, which are so apt to afflict the heart of man, in a wonderful way.

Hypocrisy He cures by telling them that everything is going to come out. That is the beginning of the chapter. Everything is going to come out, so I had better be transparent now. I may wear a cloak before men, but God will take that cloak off sooner or later. The Lord says here that "there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that

shall not be known" (ver. 2). Then the Lord passes on to unveil blessings and heavenly principles of the deepest importance to the souls of His followers, but in the midst of His discourse He is suddenly interrupted by one of the company saying to him, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me" (ver. 13). The Lord wanted their hearts and affections, but, beloved friends, man's heart—your heart and mine—unless grace reaches it, is always occupied with earth.

Suddenly this man breaks into the midst of this most earnest discourse, and says, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." The man thought he had not got enough for earth. He had not yet enough of what he would like for time. He did not get his rights, perhaps. To that Jesus replies, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" Did He come to judge? No. Did He come to save? He did. Did He come to divide the things of this earth? No. He came to win the heart for heaven. He came to unfold the love of God. He came to reveal God—to bring light into the darkness, and life to the dead, and peace to the troubled. He came to bring heavenly riches—true, abiding, eternal riches. Who has them here to-night? Have you?

The Lord's reply here is to be well noted. "Man," He says, "who made me a judge or a divider over you?" And He said unto them, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (ver. 15). I believe that to be a most important, a most salutary word for us all. I mean it is a word we all need, and to which we should all

pay heed. The Lord feels the value of it, and says, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness." And what is covetousness? Well, it is the desire to acquire what I have not got—the desire to gather and build up—to gather together round myself. You see it is the principle of the world. It is a danger for the Christian, also, and therefore the Lord says to His own, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness."

It is not the question merely of getting a thing wrongly. No, that is not the point. It is this. In the heart of man there is a sort of determination to acquire. Acquisitiveness belongs naturally to the human heart, which occupies itself with the things of time—the things of sense—the things of this life; and, concerning these things, the Lord says, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

Now, I pray you mark that word, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Well, you say, what does his life consist in? That is a very serious question. What does your life consist in? Is Christ your life? You know what Paul said, "For me to live is Christ." That was life indeed, according to God, for "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," but in having Christ as an object and motive. The Lord reads our hearts very simply. He knows the danger of acquisitiveness to the human heart, whether it be the heart of the unconverted man, or the heart of one of His own people, and in this plain and simple way He unfolds the truth, and we do well to take heed to it.

Using this man's request as a sort of text—for the Lord, in the course of His service here, uses the very interruptions that unbelief and the flesh would intrude into His gracious ministry, as opportunities for unfolding the truth, and for bringing out the light that might meet the conscience, and awaken the soul that was buried in the things of this life—He now speaks a parable to His hearers: "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully." Observe he was a rich man. He was a prosperous man. I suppose he was a man whom we might regard as a gentleman farmer. He was a landed proprietor clearly. As the possessor of his own land, he could pull down his barns, as he proposes to do, and rebuild them. He had undisputed right over that which he was going to reconstruct. He was also a rich man. Most men like to be rich! I do not say all, for some do not care for riches. This man no doubt was well known in the neighbourhood, perhaps looked up to; well known in the market of the neighbouring town, and looked upon as a clever, sagacious, prosperous, and opulent man.

Now we reach a point in his career when he is doing uncommonly well as regards his temporal affairs. He had had a beautiful and propitious seed-time. It had passed over, and had been succeeded by a good growing time. Now harvest time had come, and the earth had yielded her increase in a marvellous manner. There had been no biting east winds in the spring, and no late frosts to spoil his crops. Refreshing showers had fallen as they were needed. The sun had ripened his corn, and the earth had been most prolific, so that as he thinks of the state of his crops, he does not know what to

do with the goods with which God has surrounded him.

Clearly from the circumstances described here, he must have been in his counting-house cogitating what he should do. "And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?" You say, What part of the building was his counting-house? I believe it was his bed. That is a splendid place in which to think. There is no better time for thinking than just ere your eyelids close in sleep, or when you awake through the hours of the night.

Friend, will you think, when next you are in your bed, of where you are going to spend your eternity? Ere you close your eyelids in slumber to-night, let me ask you, will you think seriously of where you will spend eternity? What views have you for eternity? How will you spend it? What is your relation to God? If this should be the last night of your life where will you spend eternity? Think on these things. Ponder them. They are worthy of consideration.

But these were not the subjects of grave consideration with the rich man on that night. He thought within himself, saying, "What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?" All his barns were crammed to the roof. His storehouses were filled to bursting. He knew not where to put the incoming goods, with which God had so richly blessed him. What a strange thing, you say. Were there no poor round about to whom he might minister? Was there no Lazarus at his door? Were there no needy ones on all hands? Ah, my friends, these things did not disturb him, for the man lived only for

himself; and have not you, friend, till now? The centre and pivot round which he circled was self. He was self-surrounded, self-governed, and self-indulgent, I do not doubt.

Now as he says, "What shall I do," a wonderful scheme opens up before his mind. Does it concern the poor and the needy on every hand to whom he could give the surplus? Ah, no, that is not the thought. "And he said, This will I do; I will pull down my barns, and build greater." Before his mind's eye, in the darkness of that night, as he lay there, what does he see? The old barns removed, the old granaries set aside, and the ground cleared. He has fixed upon his architect. He has got the measurements and plans before his mind's eye, and he sees pile after pile of palatial storehouses rise, and into these greater barns he already sees the goods which God was giving him, stored and packed away, for "there," he now says, "I will bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

Now, my friends, tell me, did you ever hear such a soliloquy? Have you ever put yourself beside this man? I daresay many of you have not gone exactly the same road, but you have planned out your future for not a little while. You have determined what you will do next, and next, and so forth. Perhaps some of it has come to pass. God has let you increase in the things of this life, and you have got on, as this man no doubt had got on, and here you are to-night. But stop, what about the salvation of your soul? What about that which is due to the Lord? What about the claims of the Lord? Ah! the Lord has been left

out entirely. God has had no place, no part in the plan. God has not been in your thoughts. So it was with this man.

Take a good look at him as he says, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." I think I see him as he closes his eyelids. A smile of placid contentment has come over his face as he says, Soul, I have arranged everything satisfactorily, and have made provision for many years. Think of it! "For many years." Eternity he left out of his calculations entirely. How many are like him? There was a man living last Sunday night, and was arranging for things to go on far into the future; but yesterday he was buried. Many a man has gone into eternity since this night week unprepared—unconverted — unblessed—unsaved, because unbelieving and unregenerate.

Look at the folly, the audacity of this worldling, spreading himself out for the future! Sinner, see thyself. See the guilt of this lost soul, as with untouched conscience, and in disregard of God he says, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years;"—"much goods!"—"many years!" "Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Watch him closely, and note what happens. His eye closes, and he passes into slumber, contented with all, looking forward to a great future of "many years" of carnal enjoyment.

But that night an unwelcome visitor intrudes on the scene. He does not expect him. No, he is an unexpected, unwanted, unlooked-for visitor; and you say, Who is it? Ah! it is death. He wakes with the dew of death upon his brow; and he hears the voice of God saying to his guilty and godless

soul, "Fool." What wakes him? The voice of God. Oh, man, may it wake you to-night! Sinner, may it wake you now! And what does God say to this unsaved, selfish soul, who has got his plans for the future so well laid? "Fool!"

Young man, you have sketched out your life, have you not? Listen. God speaks: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." Oh, my friends, what a change that word effects! What amazement takes possession of that man's soul! His eyes are closed, but, as he listens, he hears the voice of God, saying, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" My dear friend, God may so speak to thee this night. But, thank God, you are yet in the land of the living; and if you are only thinking of the future for this life, may God cause you to hear His own blessed voice speaking to your soul, and also cause everything to give way to this momentous question—What is the state of your soul, and where will you spend eternity?

You may have a lease of your house; but you have no lease of your life. Your soul belongs to God, and this night, if God says the word, the soul will go back to God. But what about that soul? Is it still steeped in sin? Is it yet black in iniquity, or is it washed in the blood of the Saviour? Let me inquire most affectionately and earnestly. Let me implore you now to hear the word of God. Do not fall into the devil's trap, as did this poor man. I label this scene MISCALCULATION, because I cannot get any better word to describe what is true of many souls to-day. It is a scene of downright miscalculation. Why? Because the man was making his plans, and

all along he left God out, and nothing came to pass as he had planned. Oh! sinner, you too have left God out. I know you have your plans as to what you are going to do to-morrow. Possibly the new house you are about to build, the new business you are going into, the new situation you have got, wholly engage your attention, and you have made your plans for a good long time to come—"many years," in fact. "Much goods" to be enjoyed, and "many years" to be spent in their enjoyment, was what the rich farmer pictured to himself, and the next thing he found was that he was in hell. He passed from time into eternity. The last word he heard upon earth, was the word of God addressed to him, "Thou fool!"

What kind of a fool was he? Scripture speaks of many classes of fools. He was the representative of a very large class of fools that live in the world to-day. They must be called the eternity-neglecting fools. There are many such fools in this town, and some of them are in this hall to-night. I mean you, my friend, *you!* You know it yourself. You are not saved. You are not converted. I suppose the interests of your immortal soul have not given you ten serious moments of consideration all your life. You have occupied all your time with getting on, and enjoying yourself in this world. Your aim has been to get a place in the world. Yes, you say, but we must work. I know that, and I conclude that this man was not born, as men say, with a silver spoon in his mouth. I suppose he had to work hard, and the blessing of the Lord was with him. But what took place then? He did not acknowledge God. He did not turn round to God in thankfulness. He had no sense of the expression of God's love towards him. He had no

sense of the goodness of God. He was not rich toward God, as the giver of every good.

Now, you may think it a serious charge that I lay against you. It is not I. I do not lay it. "So is he," says the Lord, "that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." I remember perfectly well a servant of God speaking from this chapter some two and thirty years ago. I shall never forget a little sentence that dropped from his lips, as he came to this part of the chapter. "I suppose, my friends," he said, "there is not one here to-night, but would rather have a ten-pound note than a five-pound note. Yes, and God says, 'Thou fool.'" Weighty words were these, and should speak to you, if you are not content with what the Lord has given you.

But now tell me, What shall a man gain if he lose his own soul? Is your soul saved? That is the question. Have you yet learnt the value of that soul, because "what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" It is really the most important part of you. It is the invaluable part of you. You take care of the body. You clothe it, feed it, keep it out of danger, and out of the way of disease. Why, if you thought there was any infectious disease within a house, would you enter it? Ah, no! A lady said to me the other day, "I went up to see So-and-so, but she was ill with influenza." "And did you go in?" I asked. "Oh, no, not for the world would I go in; I might catch it and die." Yes, people take care of the body, but what about your soul, friend? Jesus said, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark viii. 37;) and this man said to his soul, Soul, you have a good long time yet on earth, many years of enjoyment shall be yours; but that night God said, "Thou fool,

this night thy soul shall be required of thee." And what became of his "much goods," and of his "many years," and, above all, what became of his soul?

What a frightful upset to all his plans, and all his schemes, was God's "Thou fool." Do you not see your own case, my friend, in this man's history? Ah, you say, I have not yet gone into eternity. Thank God, you have not! If you were a wise man to-night you would get down on your knees in this hall, and thank God that you are yet among the living. "O God," you would say, "I thank Thee that I am living yet. Lord, save me; Lord, bless me; Lord, save my soul. I have thought of my body, and my comfort; thought of my banker's account, and of my house. I have thought about everything, in fact, except my soul, and Thee. Lord, pardon, and save me!"

Ah, my beloved friend, God give you to-night to be awakened, and from this hour to turn round to Himself. God give you to know the importance and value of your priceless, immortal soul. Say, where wilt thou spend eternity, when God speaks the word that will snap the slender cord of thy life here? Where wilt thou spend that eternity? Dost thou know God? Dost thou know the Saviour? Dost thou know forgiveness? Hast thou the heavenly riches? Hast thou possessed thyself of Him, whom to know is life eternal? If you have only got what this poor man had, some of the goods of this life, which he could not take with him, then you are a poor man indeed. Some people think it a great thing to get in amongst the rich—"the poor rich" an earnest Christian lady once called them. That is a strange expression, "the poor rich," yet it is ofttimes true. The Lord said, "The poor have the gospel preached

unto them," but "how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." And we also read that "the common people heard him gladly."

This rich man was intensely poor. Why? Because his riches came in between him and God. It was the same with the rich young man, who came to the Lord, and who was loved by the Lord. "If thou wilt be perfect," said Christ to him, "go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful." Why? Because "he had great possessions" (Matt. xix. 21, 22). He put Christ in one of the balances, and his wealth in the other, and which was the heavier? His money. He put eternal life in the one scale, so to speak, and the things of this life in the other. The Lord said, Which wilt thou have? And he went away sorrowful. He really loved his money better than the Saviour. That man's follower is in this hall to-night. I will not name you, my friend. God knows you, and your conscience corrects you. Oh, may God help you to seek, and to find the true riches.

I wish I heard you saying from the depths of your conscience, What shall I do to be saved? Listen to this rich man as he said, "What shall I do?" To get eternal life? No! "What shall I do?" in order that I may enjoy life here—make myself secure of it down here upon earth. Oh, if you have seen the awful folly of this man, may you from this night go forth on a different track altogether. Depend upon it, he died that night. He lost his riches and his soul in the same hour. What a beacon is He to every unsaved soul!

I read just now a few verses out of the second of

Acts, and I will now ask you to turn to them. There is a similar question put there to that which this rich man puts in the twelfth of Luke. The apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost was preaching to those, whom he addresses as "Men of Israel," the marvellous tidings of Jesus, God's own blessed Son. He told them how He had been in this world; how the world had refused and slain Him; and how God had raised Him from the dead. He says, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up" (ver. 22). He brought out in plain language the folly of their course. They had miscalculated as much as the rich man of Luke xii. They had calculated without God. They did not want Christ. They did not love Him. They did not desire Him. His light was too bright—too strong for them. He came not to be a judge or a divider; but He came to be a Saviour. They did not know their need of Him as such, and the result was they put Him on the cross—they refused Him. But He is the One, says Peter, "whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." How utterly wrong was their calculation. They thought they could get rid of the Lord by putting Him to death. That was to be the end of Him, but God raised Him up. God brought Him out from among the dead. They had left God out of their calculations.

The man in the twelfth of Luke left God out of his calculations, and that night he was met by the word of God, practically in judgment. But in the second of Acts it is the opening of the day of grace, and on this day of Pentecost what takes place? First, Peter impresses upon the people the folly of their course, and their sin in having put the Lord to death. He then brings out this wonderful truth, that God had stepped in, and raised from the dead the One whom they had refused and slain. "This Jesus," said Peter, "hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."

It was a wonderful moment. Just ten days before the Lord Jesus had passed up into glory. Forty days He had moved about upon earth after His resurrection. His work of atonement was done. He came not to be a judge, nor a divider, but a Saviour. He came to glorify God, to save man, and to annul death. Forty days had passed since His resurrection, then He went up into glory; and ten days after that the Holy Ghost came down. It was the day of Pentecost when the Holy Ghost fell upon the hundred and twenty disciples, and when Peter stood up, and told this startling news to His murderers, that He, whom they had slain, was alive again, and was exalted at the right hand of God. They had thought to put an end to Jesus by putting Him to death, but God had raised and exalted Him, and said to Him, "Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool." And what will the next thing be? He will leave God's right hand, and His foes will then be His footstool.

Thank God, I am not going to be His footstool. Do not you be either, my friend.

Oh! but, you say, I have been His foe. True, solemnly true, but you may yet be His friend. He has a wonderful way of making friends of His foes. There is no one like Jesus for turning a foe into a friend. Jesus has a deep interest in you, and He desires to turn His foes into His friends now. What is He doing now? I will tell you. He is calling out His bodyguard. Who will go in for it? Will you? What do you mean? you ask. Why, I mean the souls that delight in Him are really His bodyguard. You know that the Queen when she comes to Scotland has a little corps, armed only with bow and arrow, who are formed into the bodyguard of the royal person. It is a very high honour to be of the bodyguard. Now you know what I mean. Christ gives you the privilege of being of His bodyguard. Believers in Him are no longer His foes, but His friends. He won three thousand hearts on the day of Pentecost. Shall He not win some to-night? He is looking for recruits to-night. Will you not join the ranks of the bodyguard to-night? You had better. If you are a wise man you will.

Peter told the house of Israel, and I can say to you now, that assuredly "God has made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." God has exalted Him. He is the One whom God thinks much of. He is the One whom God honours. What is the effect of that upon you? See what effect it had when Peter proclaimed it: "Now, when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart." What a joy it is when a sinner is pricked in his heart. I wish I were only certain that you were pricked in

your heart. You say, What do you mean? I mean their consciences were aroused. They were awakened. They were convicted sinners. They had gone on the wrong line, but they judged themselves. That is the object of the gospel. It leads men to judge themselves. It leads them to see where they really are before God.

"Now, when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, *what shall we do?*" I like that question. It is not at all like that of the poor wretched man in Luke xii. His question was, "What shall I do?" so as to be able to bestow the increase of his goods for his own exclusive benefit. What is the question these people ask? They turn and inquire, What shall we do? We are convinced of our sins. We are convinced of the error of our ways. We acknowledge we were wrong. We were opposed to Jesus, and if God has exalted Him, we are now in a wrong case entirely. It is a wonderful thing when a man gets awakened. Were you ever an aroused sinner? Have you ever been convicted of your sins? Have you ever been a self-condemned, self-judged, humbled sinner? God awaken you if you have not!

"What shall we do?" they cried. They did not know what to do. They did not say, "What shall we do to be saved?" That was rather too far for them to go at that moment. Salvation seemed out of the question. Perfect amazement was on their brow. Fear took possession of their hearts. Consternation possessed them, and conscience was smiting them. They knew very well that the judgment of God hung over them. They had been guilty of the murder, and rejection of His Son, and they thought that God

would draw the sword of His righteous vengeance from its scabbard, and deal with them according to their guilt, and they cried to the servants of God, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Then Peter said unto them, "Repent"—a good word—"and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Repent! What is repentance? It is judging yourself. Man, have you ever repented? You must either repent, or be damned. You must change your attitude towards the Lord Jesus Christ. You must change your mind towards Him, and accept Him in simple faith, coupled with self-judgment, or depend upon it there is nothing but the eternal judgment of God before you. If you are not Christ's friend, you are His foe. "Repent, and be baptized," rung in their ears that day. Why be baptized? That would test the reality of their repentance, if it existed. Go, and as publicly own His name, in the waters of baptism, as seven weeks ago, in Pilate's hall, your voice was heard crying, "Away with him, crucify him." Seven weeks ago you clamoured for His blood; now, Peter says, own His name, confess His name. I glory to confess that name. Do you not? It is the joy of the heart of the Christian to confess that name. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ." Public confession of Christ was what Peter meant.

Why does Peter put these together? The people's rejection of Christ had been public, and God demanded that there should be as downright, and public a confession, as seven weeks before, when they had demanded His death, and chosen Barabbas in His stead. The gospel comes to us rather differently

from the way in which it was presented to the Jews, for, to Cornelius, Peter said, "To him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts x. 43). The principle is the same, however. You believe in Him, and take your stand for the Lord. They repented and took their stand for the Lord. I do not believe that there is any real genuine conversion unless it comes to the surface. Some people say, We do not believe in talking much about these things. I will tell you why. You have nothing to talk about. If Christ filled your heart, you could not confess Him enough. Somebody meets you with the wonderful news that your uncle has died, and left you £100,000. You would not be ashamed to confess that. If a paragraph appeared in the *Times* announcing the fact about you, you would not hesitate to admit that you were the person in question.

Yes, my friend, yet unsaved, you are ashamed of Christ. You have never boldly owned His blessed name. If you henceforth are to be His, let all know that you are for Christ. "Repent, and be baptized, *every one of you*." It was not to be national, congregational, or all coming in a crowd. It was individually—"every one of you." Damnation is individual. Salvation is individual. Confession of Christ is individual. We cannot pass into God's kingdom all in a company. The man who says, "We are all Christians," is, I am pretty certain, not one himself.

But, you say, I go to church. Yes, but do not forget that you may go from church to hell. But I am in the membership of the church, you reply. There is no better decoy-duck to eternal ruin at the

present day than profession without the possession of Christ. It is that which lures and leads men on to destruction. I have been preaching the gospel for thirty-five years, and, of those above fifteen or sixteen years of age, whom I have seen the grace of God reach and save, ninety-five per cent. were "church members," and yet, by their own confession, till then unsaved.

Miscalculation as to this point has ruined hosts of precious souls. Profession is not possession, and a terrible day of awakening awaits all mere professors. If that awakening occur in eternity, it will be none too long for the Christless professor to deplore his earthly folly. "A fool is known by his folly," says God, whether that folly be profane or religious. What I want you to see is, that if you are a church member without Christ, it is high time you got converted. May God convert you to-night. Ah, you will join that wretched fool of Luke xii. if you do not take care. Repent, every one of you, and confess His name, for "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. x. 9).

And now, mark what Peter proclaims: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Yes, there is remission of sins. I, too, am here to tell you to-night that there is remission of sins. You have been a sinner, a downright sinner, but if you believe in, and confess the Lord Jesus Christ, God will forgive you even the sin of rejecting Him. "Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." So witnesses every

prophet. Hear another witness: "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts xiii. 38, 39). But there is yet deeper blessing to the simple believer, for he is told, "And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

There comes in the full blessing of the gospel. God is a forgiving God, and a giving God. He forgives my sins on the ground of the work of Christ, and He gives me the Holy Ghost to bring me into the enjoyment of all that is mine in Christ. God give to you, my friend, the enjoyment of the heavenly riches which belong to faith. These are worth having. I much prefer these two blessings, "the remission of sins" and "the gift of the Holy Ghost," to the "much goods" and "many years" of that poor wretch, whom God called a fool. His much prized riches did not last out the night, but our joys are eternal, as Christians. Thank God, our sins are forgiven, we have life eternal, and the Holy Ghost dwells in us to shed God's love abroad in our hearts (Rom. v. 5), and to witness to us that we are the children of God. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 6). Such is the effect of receiving the Holy Ghost, and He loves to make the child of God know that he is a child, for "the Spirit itself beareth witness unto our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. viii. 16).

There are but two classes in this hall to-night. You are either a glory-bound saint, through faith in Christ, or you are a hell-bound sinner, through being occupied with the things of this life. Among which class are you?

Ah! you say, I do not like the line to be drawn as tight as that. It is time the line was drawn tight, just to show you where you are—just to show you that you are on the wrong side of the line—and if you find yourself there and are wise, you will cross that line to Christ's side without delay. Many of Peter's hearers did, as we shall see, as he passed on to say to them: "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Thank God! He called me, and He called you, dear brother; and we heard His voice. Thank God, dear sister, that He called you, and you heard His voice. Let us together say, Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! The Lord has blessed and saved me, and just because He has called and saved me, I want you, my dear friend, to take His blessing too, and to join the choir of those who sing in the congregation of the Lord's redeemed and saved ones.

Depend upon it, the downright Christian is the happiest man on earth. I have Peter's example for exhorting you thus, for I read, "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation." Yes, every man, in this sense, has to save himself. Now, says Peter to his hearers, come out clearly and distinctly, and let all Israel know that you are on the Lord's side. Let all your friends and relatives know that you are on the Lord's side, I would say to you. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls." What a beautiful haul of fish for the gospel net in one day! And Peter was the fisherman! About three thousand souls! That is like the grace of God, and a good sample of what the gospel

does. People ask me, Do you always expect people to be converted when the gospel is preached? Certainly, what else is it to be preached for? I am disappointed when there are none converted, and we should not be surprised at many conversions taking place, for Christ is worthy thereof, and glorified thereby. You must either be converted or damned, and I should strongly urge you to join these three thousand.

This second of Acts shows us a wonderful scene, and what a contrast to the day when the law was given and broken. That was Moses' day, you know, and then three thousand men died (Exod. xxxii. 28). On the day when Peter unfolded the truth as to the ascended Saviour, three thousand men were saved. I call this Jesus' day.

When he saw the effect of his preaching, I am sure the devil was sorry that he did not leave Peter alone on that night in the high priest's palace. Seven weeks before this, Peter had cursed and sworn, and said, "I know not the Man." Here now he was confessing, and speaking of Christ most blessedly, and was the means of the conversion of three thousand souls through one preaching. I am afraid it takes three thousand sermons to convert one soul now. That is the order nowadays. The whole thing is inverted. But what a wonderful moment was that for Peter, and what a wonderful moment for the grace of Christ. The breaking of Peter was really the making of Peter. In the high priest's hall Peter was full of self-confidence. Here, in Acts ii., he is full of the Holy Ghost, and showers of blessing fall.

And now let me ask, Have you received God's blessing? Thank God, if you are the Lord's now;

and having made up your mind, my friend, you are on the right side from this night forth. Your experience will be that of a young man who spoke to me in London a month ago to-night, after I had been preaching. I said, "Are you decided for Christ?" "Thank God, I am, doctor," he replied. "And when were you decided?" "To-night, I could not hold out any longer. I am happy now." So will you be, for joy in the Holy Ghost is the portion of every decided soul. And I trust you will do what the young converts did on the day of Pentecost. Of them it is written, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." That was much better than delusive plans of "much goods" for "many years." Do you not think so?

Count the gold and silver blossoms
Spring has scattered o'er the lea;
Count the softly sounding ripples
Sparkling o'er the summer sea;
Count the lightly flickering shadows
In the autumn forest-glade;
Count the falling feathery snowflakes,
Icy gems by winter made;
Count the myriad blades that glitter
Early in the morning dew;
Count the desert sand that stretches
Under noontide's vault of blue;
Count the notes that wood-birds warble
In the evening's fading light;
Count the stars that gleam and twinkle
O'er the firmament by night.

. . . . .

When thy counting all is done,
Scarce ETERNITY'S begun;
Pause and know—"Where wilt thou be
During God's ETERNITY?"

CHAPTER XVI.

A Night in Prison.

EMANCIPATION.

Acts xvi. 6-40.

THE events related in this sixteenth chapter of Acts have a peculiar interest for us as Gentiles, because, you will observe, this was the first time that the gospel got into Europe. Oh, what infinite mercy that God has sent us the gospel of His grace. The way in which it comes out is exceedingly interesting. The apostle Paul is going on with his work in Asia; he tries to go this way and is hindered, and then he tries to go in another direction and is hindered again, and he does not know what to do. God sends him a vision in the night: he sees a man of Macedonia beckoning to him, and saying, "Come over, and help us." Nothing could be plainer than this: here was a man who felt his need. "Come over, and help us," is the language of a needy man.

Paul wakes up, and evidently understands the vision: "Assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them" (ver. 10). He was at this time at Troas, a large maritime city of Asia Minor, and there gathered assuredly that the Lord would have him preach the gospel in Europe. Immediately, therefore, he goes down to the harbour,

and finds a vessel ready to take him over. And God gives him a fair wind, for he gets across in a day and a half, whereas you will find that when he is coming back he takes five days (chap. xx. 6). The Lord loves to send the gospel to sinners, and I think the Holy Ghost delights to record God's readiness to meet the needy soul. There was a hungry heart in Macedonia, a needy sinner, and God orders everything so that His messenger with the gospel of His grace may reach that needy one speedily. Is there a needy soul here to-night? I have glorious news for you, my friend. I delight to tell you that there is not a need in your heart that my Saviour cannot meet; there is not a need of your soul that the Son of God cannot supply, and therefore you need be no longer wretched, peaceless, joyless, if only you will believe God's message.

Well, the voyage is made, and Philippi is reached. Paul and his company go into the city, and they look all around for the man, but they do not see him. They find quite a number of women going to a prayer-meeting, but the men of the place evidently thought that a waste of time. Most young men think it rather a poor thing to go to a prayer-meeting. Well, never mind, dear women, if you want salvation God has it for you, if the men will not have it. No wonder a blessing came when we find these earnest women constantly going to prayer.

I believe, if we could trace it out, that we should always find that where there is a real work of God's grace it has been preceded by much prayer. I do not gather that there was any set preaching to these women on the part of Paul and his companions. From the words which the evangelist Luke uses it would seem that they had just a little free conversa-

tion: "We sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither." I do not know anything better than that. I believe there are far more people converted by earnest Christians sitting down by their side, and having a quiet talk with them, than by sermons from pulpits, or preachings from platforms. The gospel in Europe begins, I do not say with an after-meeting, but with that which has the character of an after-meeting. Sit down by the side of a needy sinner, and tell what you know about Christ—that is what Paul, and Silas, and Luke did here.

The next thing we read is that Lydia's heart was opened. Clearly she received the gospel. I have no doubt that Lydia was an anxious soul, an inquiring one, who knew herself a guilty sinner, but anything she had ever heard up to that moment had not met her soul's need. And if you, beloved friend, have never met the Son of God the Saviour, if you do not personally know the Lord Jesus Christ, there is a want in your heart that nothing but Himself can satisfy. Be sure of this, that let men have what they will here, if they are without Christ, they are unsatisfied. The fact is your heart is too big for the world to fill. Money will not fill it, and pleasure will not fill it. No doubt many go on in a careless, untroubled sort of way, but there is a need, a want, a void in the soul which is never met till Christ is known.

Such a void, no doubt, was in Lydia's heart, and, oh, with what gladness does this simple anxious woman hear the glad tidings of the blessed Saviour, His coming into the world, His life, His death, His resurrection, the descent of the Holy Ghost, the joyful news of forgiveness, and pardon, and peace through His name! Her heart was opened, she drank in the

good news, and when her heart was opened, her house was opened too. She received the gospel of Christ into her heart, and she received the servants of Christ into her house (ver. 15). She came boldly out for the Lord; she put on Christ; she was not ashamed to own the Lord; she took the shilling, as we may say, by the river's bank, and she put on the regimentals immediately after. With her household she took her stand as being on the Lord's side. It was a beautiful start for possibly the first follower of Christ in Europe.

She was a godly woman, and very often the women are ahead of the men in the things of God. Very likely in this room there are young men utterly unconverted, who have converted sisters, and praying mothers. The fathers, perhaps, are unconverted too, they are busy making money, and getting on in the world, but, thank God, they have praying wives. May those men be converted to-night, and the boys too! Beware that you do not think lightly of a pious, earnest, prayerful woman; you ought to thank God if you have such in the circle of your acquaintance. Perhaps your conversion to God may be in answer to the prayers of such a woman. Do not make light of it, for mark, if you are not converted to God you will, you must be, damned, for all eternity. I do not mince matters; God does not; for your soul is at stake, and His truth is at stake also.

What did God send Paul to Europe for? To show the way of salvation, and a woman was the first to find it. Lydia, having learnt the way of salvation, immediately ranks herself on the side of the Saviour. She is real; she has the courage of her convictions. Would to God you had! If you are a converted man,

or woman, and have never yet truly confessed Christ, the Lord give you grace to do so now. She not only confessed with the lip, but in deed: "She besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us" (ver. 15). I think the heart of the apostle Paul was exceedingly happy when he found himself under Lydia's roof. Thank God, he could say, I have got the first convert in Europe, and the work will now spread; and truly it did.

Now the devil does not like that sort of thing, and if he can hinder the work he will. First he tries to spoil the work by what I may call patronising the apostles. He puts a poor girl, "possessed with a spirit of divination," the slave and tool of Satan, upon the track of the apostles; and day after day she follows them, saying, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation" (ver. 17). The devil tries to mix himself up with God's work, in order to discredit it. It is always so: wherever you find God working, be sure Satan will come in, and try to spoil it. I am afraid most of us would have accepted this girl's testimony, it sounded so fair. But the apostle Paul would not have Satan's help in proclaiming the truth of God.

Lydia had been manifested by the gospel at the river's side, and now this poor slave of Satan must be manifested by the word of the Lord. So Paul "turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour." Immediately there was a great uproar, and why? Because the masters of this poor damsel saw that their money-making had been stopped. When you touch a man's pocket he

begins to wince; nothing shows sooner where a man is. The moment these men see that the hope of their gains is gone, they are in a rage, catch Paul and Silas, bring them to the rulers, in the market-place, stir up the people, and put the whole city into a tumult.

I do not doubt Satan thought he had put a stop to the spread of the gospel in Europe when these two servants of the Lord were taken. They received summary justice, and without more ado were stripped, beaten, and handed over to the tender mercies of a brutal, callous man, the jailer of the city prison, who, commanded to keep them safely, "thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks" (ver. 24). This Eastern dungeon was not at all like the prisons of the nineteenth century, but a damp, loathsome place, such as Roman cruelty knew how to prepare in the way of a prison. The jailer takes evidently a sort of brutal pleasure in thrusting God's servants into the inner prison, and then making their feet fast in the stocks.

But this is the man God is going to save. This is the man who is marked out by grace to be truly converted to God. Having effectually secured the servants of the Lord, as he supposed, he left them in this horrible dungeon, with their feet fast in the stocks, and himself retired to sleep. No doubt the enemy thought that the work of the Lord was arrested. But you cannot check the grace of God, or the energy of the Spirit of God, and what looked like a great defeat, became really the opportunity for a wondrous display of divine grace, and the winning of a victory that only God could win.

But midnight approached, and what was heard in that prison? These two men, Paul and Silas, were

praying, and singing praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them. If any one had been passing by outside that night, who did not know the circumstances of the case, he would have concluded that they were having a good time in there; but what was the fact? Their feet were fast in the stocks, their backs were sore, and bleeding from the stripes they had received; they were hungry, cold, and comfortless, and yet they were not only praying, but praising. They were exhibiting the character of holy priests, and were soon to act as royal priests. As holy priests they were turning to God in prayer and intercession, and offering up to God praise and thanksgiving. They were able to thank and bless the Lord in the most adverse circumstances.

Now see what followed. God stepped in. It was midnight, and as the other prisoners heard what was going on, these songs of praise going up to God, we can imagine their astonishment. The particular nature or character of their prayer we are not told, but it strikes me very forcibly that it was connected with the testimony of God which they had come to render at Philippi. While others might be buried in slumber, and darkness reigned, the cry of prayer was going up from these two devoted servants of God for the testimony of Christ, and God heard them. He heard their prayer, and He answered it in this remarkable way: "And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed" (ver. 26). God answered the faith and confidence of His servants in this instance by an earthquake, and not only one earthquake, I think, but by two. There was a physical

earthquake which shook the prison at Philippi to its very foundations, but this became the means of a moral earthquake in the soul of this poor godless heathen jailer, and he wakes up to find where he is, and what he has been doing.

God had stepped in; the prison was shaken, the doors opened, and every prisoner's bands loosed: "And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself." Have *you* ever been wakened up? If you have been going on hitherto listlessly, and carelessly in view of eternity, without the forgiveness of your sins, and without the possession of salvation, and of peace with God, you are really asleep,—asleep on the very verge of eternal woe, and I should thank God if anything you may hear to-night could awake you. I should like to be to you to-night like the shipmaster to Jonah when he came and put his hand on him and said, "What meanest thou, O sleeper?" I would say to every careless, unconverted, unsaved soul, that hears me this night, "What meanest thou, O sleeper?" Awake to the reality of your state as a sinner, to the holiness of God, to His righteousness, to His claims upon you, to the realities of eternity. Be roused, if you have never been roused before! You need not be roused by an earthquake. No, it may be by the still small voice in which God often speaks.

God has various ways of waking up a soul. Here in Philippi was a man whose course had been one of ignorance of God, and brutal harshness in the exercise of his prison duties, but God had His eye upon him for mercy. The intervention of the earthquake was undoubtedly a testimony that God was pleased to give

in connection with the introduction of the gospel of His Son into Europe, but it was also His direct interposition to reach this man. First he was rudely awakened, and finding the doors open, and every one's bands loosed, he immediately inferred, "The prisoners are all gone, and my life is not worth preserving." The rule that applied to Roman jailers was that the jailer's life went for the life of the prisoner whom he had lost. He concluded that the prisoners were gone, and his own life therefore forfeited, and he was just on the verge of committing suicide. We are told in history that Philippi was notorious for the number of its suicides. It was quite a common thing for men thus to hurry themselves into eternity, little knowing what lay before them, and here was this wretched jailer about to hurl himself into eternity in all his guilt and godlessness.

But note how beautifully the grace of God interposed. The voice of God's servant, whom he had treated so rudely and cruelly a few hours before, was heard saying, "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here." See the effect upon this man. It was the earthquake that woke him up out of his sleep, yet I do not think it was the earthquake that touched his conscience, but this, that he heard a man, whom he had so lately treated in the most brutal manner, calling to him in the most tender, loving way, and preventing him from taking away his own life, which he otherwise would have done. Is not that a lovely word for every sinner, "Do thyself no harm"? How many are doing themselves harm, fighting against God, fighting against the truth, refusing to bow to Jesus.

That word of affectionate pleading went to the heart of the poor wretched jailer; his conscience was

reached, he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas. It was in the darkness that Paul had spoken, and the jailer must have thought within himself: "How in the world could that prisoner know that I was going to make away with myself? How could he know what I was about in the darkness?" He had a sense in his soul that God was there. Had he not heard of the preaching of these men? Had he not heard of Lydia and her household being converted? Had he not heard it proclaimed, "These are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation"? He called for a light. When a man begins to think seriously about the concerns of his soul, he always wants light. And I will tell you another thing: I never knew a soul come out of nature's darkness into the light of the gospel, that, as the truth began to dawn upon it, did not say, "I begin to see it."

A young man said to me only yesterday, as I was seeking to put the gospel before him, "I cannot see it." What a soul wants is light from God, and, thank God, He gives light. You have no need to call for it, it is shining before you. The precious Word of God is effulgent with light, both as to the ruin of man, and as to the salvation of God. It unfolds your lost condition, and it unfolds the Saviour and His finished work. The darkness is past, and the true light now shines. The light of the gospel is now for anybody and everybody it is for whosoever will.

No doubt this poor man was in a great state of trepidation. He came trembling: he was in real exercise: he was an awakened sinner. A little while ago he was a careless sinner, doing Satan's work, but now by the grace of God he became an exercised

man in the throes of the new birth, and deeply convicted of his sinful state. Have *you* ever been convicted? Have you ever gone to God in this condition, seeking light, and trembling with the sense that you have sinned against Him? If not, I beseech you, hear the voice of God's Word declaring that you have sinned, for "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." But, thank God, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." In the very scene of our sin, and ruin, misery, and degradation, God has stepped in, and brought salvation to us in the Person, and through the work, of His own beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

This awakened, convicted man now brought out Paul and Silas, and put to them the most momentous question that a man could ask, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" He had heard before, no doubt, that these men showed "the way of salvation," but those words had no meaning for him. Now his eyes are opened, his conscience is aroused, he sees that up to this point he had been on the road to eternal damnation. You must remember that up to this hour he was a poor dark heathen, who had never heard the gospel, who had never heard of Jesus, nor of the love of God, but now, awakened, and convicted, with a sense of his sins pressing on his soul, he cries out, "What must I do to be saved?" Let me inquire of you; have you ever in your soul's history passed through a moment like this? Have you ever got into God's presence, bowed down with a sense of your sins, your guilt, and your need, and put this question that the jailer asked of Paul and Silas? I confess to you that nothing gives me greater delight and joy than to hear this question, the breathing of an agonised sinner, the expression

of his soul's desire to get salvation. And, you may depend upon it, it was with gladness of heart that Paul and Silas heard the jailer's query. "What must I *do?*" he cries, because when a man is awakened, he always supposes there is something he must do, something which must be performed or brought forth by him, to put things right between his soul and God. But let us distinctly get hold of this, that nothing which you or I can do can ever repair the breach between our souls and God. Then can it not be repaired? Yes, thank God, He repairs it from His own side. It is the One who has been sinned against who repairs the breach, and bridges over the distance, so that we can be brought near to Him.

Do you remember, when our Lord Jesus Christ was on earth, that certain Jews came to Him saying, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" (John vi. 28.) And do you remember His answer? "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." The doing is not on our side, it is on God's side; it is Christ's doing, not ours, which brings salvation.

Again, in Romans iii. the question, what a man is to do to be saved, is exceedingly simply answered: "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified *by faith without the deeds of the law*" (vers. 27, 28). Then in chap iv. we read: "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. *But to him that* WORKETH NOT, *but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness*" (vers. 4, 5). I know of no more

remarkable statement in the whole compass of God's Word than that. Works and grace are in absolute contrast. Works would be something on my side; grace is something from God's side.

But what is the jailer told to do? God's answer to man's query is exquisite in its simplicity. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house," falls on the ears of the awakened sinner. How divinely simple. He had only to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and he would be a saved man. There is no word of anything that he must *do* in order to get salvation. This is a gospel that exactly meets helpless sinners without strength, and no wonder the jailer believed at once. His conversion was a rapid one indeed. One minute asleep in his sins, the next awake and deeply anxious about these sins—and straightway thereafter he hears the gospel and believes it, and rejoices in God with all his house.

But some of you say, I do not believe in sudden conversions. Do you not? I do. Most likely you never will believe in sudden conversions till you are converted yourself. Was not this jailer converted suddenly? He puts a plain question, and he gets a straight answer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." It was not himself only, but his household was likewise to come in for God's blessing.

See what an immense difference one word makes. What shall I *do?* cries the jailer. He is not told to do anything but believe. I know that people have got in their heads the idea of being saved by works, but you will find in Scripture that men are not saved by *works*, but by simply hearing and believing. Faith rests on God's Word, faith comes by hearing.

Take the history of the conversion of Cornelius the centurion, as related by Peter in Acts xi. Cornelius is told to send to Joppa for Peter, "who shall tell thee *words* whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved." You see, beloved friends, works are what spring from our side, and by works no man was ever justified: words are from God, and it is on God's Word that faith rests: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. x. 17). "Hear, and your soul shall live," says the prophet (Isa. lv. 3). Therefore the answer to the jailer's question is most beautiful: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

But you might say to me, What did this man know about the Lord Jesus Christ? I do not think he knew anything whatever about Him up to that moment, and therefore the next verse is very important: "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." They did not stop with merely saying, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," but unfolded the gospel to him; they brought out the glorious truth of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Observe, he was not told to believe on Jesus merely, but on the *Lord Jesus Christ.* This is very important, because this full title sets forth what the Saviour is—He is Lord of all, His name is Jesus, which signifies Jehovah the Saviour, and His character is that He is the Christ, the Anointed One of God. From this it follows that He is more than a mere man. Yes, indeed, were He not more than mere man, He would be no Saviour for you and me. If He were not very man He could not stand in our stead, and if He were not the Eternal Son of God He could not rise to the height of God's claims.

I will ask you to turn for a moment to the Old Testament Scriptures, for I wish to show you that the One in whom I want your hearts to confide, while truly a man, is much more than a man. Look at Isaiah xlv.: "Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? Have not I the Lord? And there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." If you are to be saved, it must be by looking to Him. And the next verse shows that every knee will have to bow to Him because He is God: "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear" (vers. 21-23). Now when I turn to the New Testament I find that the homage which is so distinctly claimed by God, as God, in Isaiah xlv., is with equal distinctness to ber endered to the Lord Jesus Christ as man. (See Phil. ii. 5-11.) As man "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

In lowly grace He became a man, but He was a striking contrast to the first man. The first man wanted to be like God, the second Man was in the form of God; it was not an object of rapine to Him

to be on an equality with God, but He emptied Himself and became a man. What was apostasy in man, or angels, was perfection in Christ. Adam wanted to rise from manhood to Godhead; he left his first estate—which is apostasy—and, in seeking to get up, fell definitively. Christ emptied Himself, made Himself of no reputation, came down to earth taking a servant's form, and as man, in death accomplished a work by which God is glorified, and sin put away. What happened then? God raised Him from the dead, glorified Him as man, and then declared that at the name of Jesus—the once humbled but now exalted man—every knee should bow. Every created being, angelic, human, or demoniac, must bow to the name of Jesus, and confess that He is Lord. Paul doubtless told this poor jailer of the Person of Christ, of His life, of His death, of His resurrection, of the value of His blood, as well as saying to him, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Does any one now ask, What have I to do to be saved? Romans x. furnishes a very simple answer: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (vers. 9, 10). Are you going to believe God's Word to-night, and confess His Son? Will you yield your heart now to this precious loving Saviour? You could not do better than imitate this jailer. The jailer heard the gospel, "Believe . . . and be saved." He believed, and he was saved. Manifestly he believed with his heart, and confessed with his mouth, for we read: "He took them *the same hour* of the night,

and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his, straightway." He did not wait till the morning.

That man wanted salvation, and got it. He asked how he could be saved, heard how he could be saved, and the same night he "rejoiced, *believing in God* with all his house" (ver. 34). He had been told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ: Scripture here tells us he believed in God, for he had heard who the Lord Jesus Christ was, as well as what He had done. Now he was a converted man, a saved man, a rejoicing man, by simply believing God's message, through His servants, concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. He was an emancipated man. Delivered from the power of Satan, his chains all burst, he was out of prison truly and spiritually, and he at once identified himself with the Lord's servants, and the Lord's work.

What a wonderful change did grace make in that jailer's history. Saved and blessed, he was manifestly on the Lord's side, and his whole life and ways bespoke the radical nature of his conversion. How different the way he dismissed the Lord's servants to that in which he received them. "Depart, and go in peace," are the last words we have from his lips, as in the morning he brought his guests out of his house. The lion had become a lamb. The servant of the devil had become the happy servant of Christ. What emancipation indeed is that which grace brings to sin's captives through the sweet and lovely name of Jesus!

CHAPTER XVII.

A Night without a Morning.

RESURRECTION.

Isa. xxi. 11, 12; 1 Thess. v. 1-11.

WE have been looking on previous evenings at that which the Lord Jesus Christ did when He came the first time into man's world. We have looked at His birth, a little at His life, and oftentimes at His death, the basis and the groundwork of the soul's relationship with God. We have seen that the work of Christ fits the believing soul absolutely for the presence of God, even now, that the atoning work of the Saviour is so perfect that even now the conscience is purged, the believing soul is cleansed from its sins, and is brought in righteousness to God: nay, more, the believer is born of God, possesses His nature, is in relationship with Him, knows he is a child of God, and can call Him Father: because coupled with the forgiveness of sins in the New Testament, is the reception by the believer of the Holy Ghost, who dwells in him, and produces in him the spirit of sonship, so that he can truly say, Abba, Father.

When the sinner believes in Jesus, his sins are forgiven, and as soon as forgiveness of sins is known, the believer is sealed with the Holy Ghost. Christ was

preached at the beginning as the exalted Saviour, who gives repentance and remission of sins; and when the gospel was preached to Cornelius and his friends, and the proclamation was made, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins," we read that "while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word" (Acts x. 44). That is the way in which the Holy Ghost comes now. A sinner hears of Jesus, and is made to feel his need of the Saviour, *i.e.*, he gets awakened, becomes exercised about his soul before God, then he turns to Jesus, believes on Him, trusts Him, gets under the shelter of His blood, and having received the forgiveness of his sins, God gives him the Holy Ghost, as His seal upon all who believe in His own blessed Son.

Scripture presents Christ personally as the object of faith, and whosoever believes in Him comes under the benefit of the work He has accomplished, and then when there is faith in Jesus, and in the work which He has accomplished, God seals the faith of the newborn soul, and the Holy Ghost comes to dwell in the person of the believer, being the seal of his faith, and the earnest of those blessed, unseen, and eternal realities that belong to every child of God. In proof of this statement notice what the apostle Paul says, in writing to the Ephesians: "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. i. 13). Who believes the gospel? The sinner. And who is sealed by the Holy Ghost? The believer. Nothing could be more simple: the sinner hears the gospel,

and believes it; and the believer, being sealed by the Holy Ghost, is brought into the enjoyment of all that belongs to him.

I will illustrate what I mean. Suppose I want a hundred sheep, and go to the nearest sheep-fair, and find what I want. I say to their owner, "I am prepared to give you two pounds each for your sheep." He contracts to sell me the sheep at the price, I put down the money, and thus the sheep become mine. What do I do next with them? Drive them home? No, I do not take them home immediately, I am not in such a hurry: before I drive them a yard I take my paint pot, and I put *my mark* upon every one of my sheep. If I fail to do this, in driving them home they might get mixed up with some other people's sheep, and I should not know which were mine. Alas! that is the way Christians do get mixed up with the people of the world, and often you cannot know the one from the other. It will not do for me to say I think I know that sheep to be mine by a leg mark, or by the turn of his ears, or by his horns: no, I must be sure of my own, and so I put my peculiar mark on each. Similarly, in giving the Holy Ghost, God puts His mark, clearly and distinctly, upon all His own.

But let me ask you this: Did the mark I put upon the sheep make it mine? You know it did not. I put the mark on it because it was mine, but it was the money I paid for it that made it mine. So it is the work of Christ, the blood of Christ, that redeems, and saves, and brings the soul to God, and then the Holy Ghost is given to dwell in the believer as God's seal upon him, and the earnest of the good things that belong to him, so that the believer is sure of glory; his heart is now put in possession of eternal things,

and he enjoys them. It is like the bunch of grapes from Eshcol which Israel saw in the desert, and beautiful they were, it took two men to carry one bunch. The people were not in the land when they saw those grapes, but having seen the grapes, they had a taste of the land before they got into it. Before you and I go to heaven, we have, by the Holy Ghost, a taste of heavenly things. We know that we belong to heaven, and we know the atmosphere of the place we are going to. We know the Father, we know the Saviour, we have eternal life, and enjoy communion, and fellowship with the Father, and with the Son.

A Christian has thus actually begun his heaven down here on earth. People often say, "We shall be happy by-and-by." Why not be happy now? Why put it off? The Lord wants you to be happy down here. Oh, but, you say, I have seen a great many people who say they are Christians, and they are not happy. The more the pity, they ought to be, if they are Christians. But perhaps these may not have been real Christians, still that does not prove there are no real ones. Young men think they have found a ground for remaining unbelievers, because they have found some professors who are not genuine. I ask then, When you get hold of a bank-note, do you always put it in the fire, because now and then a bad bank-note has turned up? Not you, you know better, for what does a bad bank-note prove? That there are plenty of good ones. So if I meet with a counterfeit saint, he only proves that there are real ones.

Now what is a Christian? He is a man clear of death and judgment, brought to God, his sins forgiven: one who has a new nature, who has received

the Holy Ghost, and who has a new place before God in Christ, of whose body he is a member; one who knows he is a child of God, an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ; who has nothing but glory now before him, and is looking for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, to take him home to the rest and glory of the Father's house. It is therefore a wonderful thing to be a Christian: an unspeakably blessed thing: and I should like every soul here to-night to have the enjoyment of it.

But, some one says, many Christians are often very miserable, and dull-looking, and do we not read, in the seventh chapter of Romans, of a man crying out, "Oh, wretched man that I am"? Yes, but do you know why that man is so wretched? I will tell you. He is thinking only of himself. He speaks forty times about himself, and never once about Christ. He has a good right to be wretched. That man is overwhelmed with what I call "the self-occupation fever," and plenty of Christians, I fear, have that complaint. If you were only looking at Christ, instead of at yourself, your heart would be full of Christ, for you would be always feasting on Him.

When you get the joy of the gospel, the knowledge of God's love, and what it has accomplished for you, you will find it a wonderful thing, and you will have a deepening sense of the glory and worth of Christ. It will not make you wretched, but unspeakably happy. Let me say to you therefore, with all emphasis, that Romans vii. does not describe proper Christian state or experience. It is a very good thing for a man to learn, as the man in Romans vii. does, that he is good for nothing, so that he has to turn to Another. In the end you find he gets

delivered from himself, and then he is no longer groaning and sighing, but giving thanks: "I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord." I get in the cross—the death of Christ—not only what puts away my sins, but also what gives me title to be rid of myself, though the one part is often known a long time before the other. I recollect well the night when I learned that God had forgiven and forgotten my sins, but I confess it was certainly two or three years after that I learned that God had given me leave to forget myself. And that was a great day in my history when I learned to forget myself in the contemplation of Christ.

How does one get to that point? I will tell you briefly. If you look at Christ, dying on the cross for your sins, you will get relief for your conscience in the knowledge that those sins are put away for ever. But if you look at the cross, and see Christ dying for *you*, and see that you died with Christ, you will learn that you have a new life, and a new place, a new standing before God altogether. As the apostle says, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. ii.). It is an immense thing to see this new standing. As a sinner I was in Adam, and a partaker of death and judgment, but, by grace, I am now in Christ, where Christ now is, before God.

If you will study Romans v., vi., and vii., you will find that in the fifth chapter you have two heads, Adam and Christ; in the sixth two masters, sin and God; and in the seventh two husbands, the law and Christ. It is plain that I cannot be under two heads

at once: if I am in Adam, I am not in Christ; and if I am in Christ, I am not in Adam. How do I get into this new standing? Through faith in Christ who died for me, and rose again, and I learn that I died with Him. How do I get from under the dominion of the old master, sin? By death. "As many of you as were baptized unto Jesus Christ, were baptized unto his death" (vi. 3). You start your new career before God on the ground of your identification with the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. You are thus set free from your old master, sin, and you have a new Master, God. How do you get free from the old husband, the law? By death too. Is the law dead? God forbid. Who is dead then? The man to whom the law applied: I am dead. When does a man get out of the region of law? When he is dead. "Ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God" (vii. 4).

But there is another thing I must not forget. When a young woman is going to be married, people often ask, What is her dowry? You will find the believer's dowry in Romans viii. There is what may be called the marriage settlement, and a splendid one it is. There you have the unfolding of the truth of the new place which is yours, in Christ, before God. The believer is in Christ, and hence there is no condemnation, and Christ is in him. He is in the Spirit, and the Spirit is in him. He is a son of God, a child of God; he can say, Abba, Father. He is looking for the glory of God with joy, waiting for the redemption of the body, and, while he is waiting down here, what is taking place? The Holy Ghost is

interceding *in* him, and Christ on high is interceding *for* him. Everything works together for good, and God is for him, so that he can say triumphantly, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (ver. 31.) And then Paul concludes by saying: "We are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (viii. 37-39). That chapter opens with no condemnation, and closes with no separation; and this is what every believer is entitled to know, and enjoy, in the power of the Holy Ghost.

Well now, I really think it is worth while to be a Christian. I give you my honest conviction. Have I proved it? Blessedly. I can only say I have been thirty-five years on the road to glory, and it gets better and better as I go on; the light gets brighter, and the joy gets deeper. And I may add this, I never yet met a man who was sorry he was converted. I have known scores of men die who were sorry they had not been converted. Therefore, if there are any here to-night who are not converted, I really think if they are earnest, and honest, and simple, they will want to be Christians from this night forth. For I can tell you we Christians have got an uncommonly bright prospect. *We* have a title to glory without a flaw, and a prospect without a cloud; *you* have a title to hell, a title to the lake of fire, without a flaw, and a prospect without one single ray of light to cheer it, or to relieve it. Which of us, do you think, is the better off?

The Christian having this new place before God, and being so blessed, what does he desire? To be with his Lord. The first coming of our Lord Jesus Christ fits us for His second coming. His second coming is always presented in Scripture as the Christian's hope—His second coming in a particular character, as the Bridegroom for the Bride. Oh, says some one, I thought the Lord was coming to judge the world. True, He is, but that is not the way He presents Himself to His own. He is coming as the Bridegroom to claim His Bride, and I never knew a bride yet who connected a court of justice, a trial, and a sentence with the coming of her bridegroom. Surely every bride would say, "My bridal day will be the brightest in my life."

What am I looking for as a Christian? For the coming of the Lord, as my Saviour, not for death. If you are looking for death, you have not yet risen to the height of what the gospel does for the believer. I know the world may scoff, and say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" and I shall have something to say by-and-by to the scoffer of Edom, who says in derision, "Watchman, what of the night?" But, first of all, I say to you who are Christians, What lies before you? It is the coming of the Lord. Did He not say, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also"? (John xiv. 3.) He did. And does not the apostle Paul say: "But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the

second time, without sin, unto salvation"? (Heb. ix. 26-28.) When He comes back the next time, do you think He will touch the question of sin with His people? Impossible. When He came the first time He settled for ever with God the whole question of our sins, for He bare them, and put them away; and when He comes again it will be "without sin," *i.e.*, not raising that question, but for salvation, for our deliverance, spirit, soul, and body, out of this scene altogether.

It is very important to see this, that a Christian need not even expect to die. On a previous occasion I made a remark which somebody afterwards said he wished I had amplified. It was this, The man who is only born once dies twice, but the man who is born twice will certainly not die twice, and he need not even die once. I do not say you will not die, but I say emphatically it is part of the gospel that you need not die.

I will tell you how I learned this blessed truth. Thirty years ago, when a medical student, I was living in the north of London, in the house of a godly couple, who had but two children, a son and a daughter. The little boy of thirteen, Johnnie, was very friendly with me. One evening in the summer of 1864 I was busy at my studies, when there was a knock at the door, and I said, "Come in." In walked John with a book and slate under his arm, and a frown on his brow. "If you please, sir," he said, "I have got an awfully difficult sum in algebra, which I cannot understand, and mother said perhaps you would be kind enough to explain it to me." We sat down to the equation, and very soon it worked out all right. The frown went off the boy's face, he was delighted, and

he thanked me very heartily. He was walking off in the full conviction that he would be at the top of his class the next day, knowing this difficult sum, when I said, "Stop, John, there is a still more difficult problem to be settled: how are you to be saved?" "Only by the Lord Jesus," he replied. "Quite true, and do you know the Lord Jesus yet?" "I do not, but I wish I did." "Well, you may know Him if you really wish to, you may come to Him just now," and taking up my Bible I put the gospel as simply as I could before the little fellow.

Within ten minutes the light entered his heart, and he confessed his faith in the Lord Jesus. He believed the gospel so simply and readily that, thorough believer as I am in sudden conversions, I began to think that perhaps he did not apprehend the subject, and was professing to be converted too quickly. I questioned him, and cross-questioned him, and tried to puzzle him if I could, but it was no good. He had come to Jesus, and He had saved him, and blotted out his sins, and the boy's face was beaming in the sense of the Lord's love. "Well, suppose the Lord should come?" said I. I would be quite happy to meet Him," replied the lad. "And suppose you were to die?" "I would be quite happy to die now," was his calm answer. "But, sir," he added, "there is no reason why I should die now, is there?" "What do you mean, my little man?" said I. "Well, you know, sir, you have been telling me that Jesus has died for me, and I thought then there would be no need for me to die."

I said to myself, "Thank God, that boy knows the gospel better than I do." I had never seen clearly till then that because Jesus had died and risen again,

the believer in Him is delivered from the necessity of death, so that the apostle may well say, "We shall not all sleep" (1 Cor. xv. 51). The Lord in His wisdom may, and has let many of His saints die, and go into the grave, but when He comes He will raise them up. Even in the case to which I have just referred, that was His will.

I lost sight of that lad for over a quarter of a century, but I heard that as he grew up, he became a noted servant of Christ, and his name was known in many quarters of England and Scotland, as a preacher of the gospel. Twenty-seven years had rolled by, when a professional call took me one day to the south coast of England. I was told that there was an earnest preacher—a doctor of divinity—living in the town, whose name I thought I recognised as that of my former little friend John, and I thought I would go and see him. I sent in my card, and he came into the drawing-room, and received me with open arms. "I would not have missed this for ten thousand worlds," he said, as we grasped hands after twenty-seven years of separation. Each had much to tell of the grace of the Lord to our souls during that long period. It was only a few minutes that I was with him, for I had to leave, and very shortly after I heard that as he was going to preach one day, he felt ill, reclined on a sofa, and, while alone, passed away to be with his Saviour. So I say you *may* die, but get hold of this, you *need* not.

The scoffer may say to me, "All men will die," but God's Word assures me, "We shall *not* all sleep." The Lord is coming presently, and those who know Him will pass up into glory without death. I know that men scoff at the idea of the Lord's coming, just

as the child of Edom says in Isaiah xxi., "Watchman, what of the night?" Well, what is the night? The night is the time of the absence of Jesus, and the morning will be when He returns. And the apostle in the scripture I read to you, says, "We are not of the night nor of darkness" (1 Thess. v. 5). The Christian he calls a child of light, and of the day. The Christian is *in* the night, but not *of* the night: he is *of* the day, and he is going on *to* the day. And what of you, my unsaved, unconverted friend? You are of the night, as well as in the night of the world, a sinner in your sins, and you are on your road to an eternal hell, but Satan will not let you know it if he can help it. You are in darkness, and your thoughts, and your deeds, are thoughts and deeds that suit the night. You know nothing of light, you know nothing of God, you and He have never met yet. Christ, who is the light, and you, alas, are total strangers. But you may know Him as your Saviour this very night, and then you will be able to look forward to the morning.

Now, what do I hear the watchman say, in answer to the scoffer? Listen: "The morning cometh." The morning will surely come, a morning without clouds for every believer, a morning of clear shining after rain. After all the night of sorrow we look for the coming of the Lord as the Bridegroom of our hearts, and oh, what a moment it will be when He comes, and the children of the day rise to meet their Lord in the air. Oh, happy saints! blessed are ye who belong to the Lord, and are of the day. The apostle in writing to the Romans can say: "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand" (Rom. xiii. 11, 12).

The apostle does not mean that we are more sure about being saved, but that the hour of our deliverance out of this scene, body, soul, and spirit, is nearer than when we believed. The Lord is about to take us to the place to which we belong. Where does a Christian belong to? To heaven. Where does a man of the world belong to? To earth. Ah, but, you say, if I were to admit that I belong to heaven, I should have to shake off a good deal of the world. Well, that would do you no harm. It is a very good thing for a man who is running a race to shake off a hindrance. Would that you could see clearly that the Christian belongs to heaven, to Christ, who is there, and that he is not of the night, but is a child of light, and belongs to the day. He is looking for the morning, and he is fitted for it by his Saviour's work. Now that the night is far spent and the day so near at hand, it is high time to awake out of sleep. Why? Because we are going to be judged? No, but because our salvation is nearer than when we believed.

If you will look now for a moment at the scripture which I read from 1st Thessalonians, you will see how the apostle brings out clearly what Christians are looking for. He says, "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you." "Times and seasons" relate—as prophecy always does—to things down here on earth. "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." Let me say, by way of explanation, that the last four verses of chap. iv. are a parenthesis, and the fourteenth verse of the fourth chapter is really connected with the first verse of the fifth chapter. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in

Jesus will God bring with him"—that is, when the Lord Jesus returns by-and-by in power and glory, He will then bring all His saints, who have previously died, with Him.

But the question naturally arises, How can the Lord bring His people with Him? Surely He must in the first place take them to be with Him? That is exactly what the last four verses of chap. iv. explain. The apostle shows that when the Lord Himself comes to claim His loved Bride, He first raises the dead saints, then changes the living, and both together are caught up to meet Him in the air. It is true you have the voice of the archangel, but the Lord Himself descends from heaven with a shout, and it is His shout that the sleeping saints will hear (John v. 28). Would you not like to hear that shout? Would you not like to see your Lord this very night? Could anything gladden your heart like seeing that precious Saviour who has died for you, and fitted you for glory? Besides the shout, and the archangel's voice, there is the trump of God—no doubt a military allusion. The general gives the word of command, the aide-de-camp passes it on, and the trumpeter rings out the order to all the field. So will it be when the Lord comes.

When the shout, and the voice, and the trump are heard, the first movement is among the dead saints. The dead in Christ—not the dead out of Christ—shall rise first. "Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. iv. 17). Oh, what a prospect! How sweet! How comforting! I delight to think it may be to-night we shall hear the voice of our blessed Lord Jesus, and shall rise to meet Him, and be with

Him for ever. The dead in Christ of every clime and age will rise in the likeness of Christ. The bodies sown in weakness, dishonour, and corruption will be raised in power, glory, and incorruption, after the pattern of Christ's resurrection. "This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power" (Rev. xx. 5, 6). If the saint is in the grave, when the Lord comes, he will be taken out of that grave, in the very likeness of Christ. The Holy Ghost says, "When he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." And what then? We shall be for ever with Him. What a prospect!

Now, many of you dear people have been looking forward to dying, and after that to being judged. Both death and judgment are behind the Christian, while life and glory are before. How is death behind me? Christ died for me. How is judgment behind me? Christ bore my judgment. Will there be any condemnation for the believer? Impossible. Nor will there be any judgment of the person of the believer. Your works and mine, as believers, will be reviewed in the light of the judgment seat of Christ, in view of reward; but remember when we get there we shall be in the very likeness of Christ.

I know some people say you cannot be sure whether you are going to heaven or hell till the day of judgment. Are you going then to take the apostle Paul out of heaven, where he has been for eighteen hundred years, and put him on his trial as to whether he is to go there or not? The essence of the gospel is this, that the judgment which you and I deserve has already been borne by the Saviour, and now we stand before God in Christ clear of all judgment, so that

by-and-by we shall be caught up in His very likeness to be with Him for ever. Let us take care that our conduct is suitable to our position. Let us put on "the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation"—the head covered by the consciousness, that we are going to glory. You would be a notable person if you were known as one who had always on the helmet of salvation, while having on also the breastplate of faith and love, which keeps you going on right, and preserves you from the attacks of the enemy. As we are not of the night nor of darkness, so we are not looking for judgment or wrath: for "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him" (1 Thess. v. 9, 10). Blessed words!

Now, I ask, could anything be brighter or more blessed than the Christian's prospect? Instead of the fear of death, judgment, and wrath, he has before him the bright hope of seeing, and being for ever with the Lord. We are looking for it "in the morning," as it says in Psalm xlix. The godless are laid in the grave like sheep: "Death shall feed upon them, and the righteous shall have dominion over them *in the morning*." Cheer up, my dear brethren, let your hearts be joyful, let your souls be encouraged: the night is nearly gone: your Lord is coming. And that is the more reason why we should be increasingly earnest and fervent in desiring and endeavouring to get poor sinners brought to the Saviour. If I think a man may live the natural term of his life, I may give a good many in this hall a few years yet to live. But, besides the uncertainty of life, there is the fact

that the Lord is coming. What does He say in Matthew xxv.? That while the five foolish virgins went to buy oil, the bridegroom came. At midnight there was a cry, "Behold the bridegroom." That is the cry of God's Spirit which has already gone forth.

The Person of Christ is being preached, and the effect is a general activity. All the virgins arose and trimmed their lamps, the foolish as well as the wise. The foolish are the mere professors, and no doubt there are some of them here to-night. What was their folly? They took their lamps, but had no oil in their vessels: they had not got the Holy Ghost. I think I hear somebody saying, You are making too much of receiving the Holy Ghost. Indeed I am not. The Lord Jesus points this out as the great difference between the wise virgins and the foolish, that the wise took oil, in their vessels, with their lamps. The wise were deeply concerned about having the oil, the foolish were only concerned to have lamps—something they could hold in their hand to make other people think they were right, when all the while they were wrong. And are you here to-night a mere professor of Christianity but unconverted, a church member, but unsaved, a poor foolish virgin, a lamp-holder, but oil-less? If you would be wise, make sure of having the oil, the Holy Ghost. This distinguished the wise virgins: they had with them what would maintain the light till the Lord came.

Do not risk any delay, I beseech you. See what came to these foolish virgins through their delay: "While they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut" (Matt. xxv. 10). It was in vain for them to come knocking after-

wards. The answer from within could only be: "I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity" (Luke xiii. 27). Oh, beloved friends, that will be a terrible day for all mere professing Christians. When the Lord comes, every one of His own will be caught up: you will find this one gone, and that one gone, and you have not gone, you are left behind, you had a name to live, but, alas! you were dead. Oh, Christless professor, get the oil to-night, I beseech you!

And now, scoffer, have you something to say to me? You do not believe in these things, do you? You ridicule the idea of the Lord's coming? St Peter has already told us of you: "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?" (2 Pet. iii. 3, 4.) "Watchman, what of the night?" cries the New Testament scoffer derisively. The night is going on still, there is not the least sign of the Lord's coming, for "since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

Stop, my friend, that is not true. The flood has intervened. God did judge the world once; and if He judged the world once, by water, He will do it again, not by water, but by fire. Why does the Lord not come? Not that He is slack concerning His promise, but because He is "long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Ah, man, if you were wise, instead of scoffing, you would go down on your knees, and say, "Thank God, the Lord did not come yesterday, for I am not yet prepared, I have got no oil: thank God for His long-suffering, which

yet offers me salvation." But mark, "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night," so you had better repent now, and be ready.

The watchman saith something, what is his cry? "The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come" (Isa. xx. 12). Heed that call. The Spirit of God calls you. The Spirit and the Bride say to Jesus, Come: they invite him that heareth to say to the Lord, Come: they invite him that is athirst to come, "and whosoever will, let him come, and take the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii. 17). God lingers in goodness over a world of sinners, He keeps back the moment of His Son's return, that He may yet gather in souls, and save the unsaved, the guilty, the godless, by the converting power of the gospel.

The Lord is not willing that you should perish, but remember this, "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night" (2 Pet. iii. 10), and I never heard of a thief blowing a trumpet when he was going to break into your house. Thus will the Son of Man come to deal with this godless scene. When men "shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and *they shall not escape*" (1 Thess. v. 3). And what then? Then, when the Lord's mediatorial or millennial reign is over, you will have the burning up of all things, the great conflagration of which Peter speaks: "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness."

Why? Because we know that what man thinks so much of is merely "reserved unto fire," it is all evanescent, it is all passing away, a fleeting shadow; but what God gives us in the gospel is abiding, eternal, and immutable.

In Revelation xxi., where this dissolution of all that we see around us is also spoken of, we have the new heavens, and the new earth brought in, into which the Christian passes in association with Christ, the judgment of the great white throne having taken place. Remember that the sinner, who has died in his sins, will be raised again in his sins, to stand before that throne. You may lie a long time in your grave, friend, forgotten by men, but not forgotten by God. Yours is an awful future, because, as the watchman truly said, "The morning cometh, *and also the night.*" It is the morning the believer has before him, but what have you before you? That dark night, "the blackness of darkness for ever," of which the Holy Ghost speaks through the apostle Jude (ver. 13), and which God calls "the second death."

Resurrection is a universal truth. Every Christian will have part in the first resurrection, "unto life" and glory. For the unsaved it will be, alas! "unto judgment," for "there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just, and unjust" (Acts xxiv. 15). It is to be noticed, however, that when the wicked dead are raised, God does not call theirs "the second resurrection" but the "second death" (Rev. ii. 11, xx. 6-14, xxi. 8).

Surely, dear unsaved one, once is enough to die: will you face the second death? In the first you pass out of man's sight, but in the second death you pass out of God's sight. The Holy Ghost thus describes

the eternal future of the lost: "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have *their part* in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: *which is the second death*" (Rev. xxi. 8). Solemn list, and who are they who head it? The fearful and unbelieving. I quite admit you have in that sad category of the lost the gross sinners, the murderers, and whoremongers, but they do not head the list. If God sent down an angel from heaven to this great city, to record on his tablet the names and the character of all those who will be sure to have their part in the second death, where do you think he would begin? Do you think he would commence with the debauched frequenters of the public-houses, the slums, the dens of iniquity that you would be afraid or ashamed to enter. I believe not. His list would commence with "the fearful and the unbelieving." It is the timid people, the cowards, those who are afraid to confess Jesus, and the calm cold, critical unbelievers in Jesus that head the list of the damned. Oh, how many have I seen in this city, interested, anxious, and somewhat convicted, but afraid to confess Christ. My dear friend, perhaps you are such an one; a young man, or a young woman, knowing the gospel, but holding back from confessing Christ. Will you be among those who head the list of the lost?

How different will be the future of the saved and the unsaved. Both will be in resurrection, for "all that are in the graves" will come forth, some to "life," some to "judgment." This latter means only to be judged, convicted, and condemned.

Do you mean to go into this night without a morn-

ing? The morning will soon come for the Christian: our night will soon end in a glorious morning: but your night, friend, will have no morning. Pause, and ask yourself, Can I risk an eternity so terrible, a godless, hopeless, peaceless, joyless, because a Christless, eternity?

Have you ever known what it is to endure a night of sickness, and spent it tossing restlessly upon your bed? How long it seemed! The clock moved so slowly; each half-hour seemed a century, but at length, after long watching and waiting, you saw through the crack of the shutter, a little gleam that told you morning was coming. What a relief it was! But what will it be to be bound in chains of everlasting darkness? Oh, friend, I pray you, think of it! Picture to yourself a man in the depths of a lost eternity, in the unutterable gloom of that scene where light and hope never enter. The slow tick of hell's clock—as another has said—falling with maddening regularity on the ear, and the eye vainly seeking in the impenetrable darkness to follow its pendulum, as it swings slowly from side to side, saying, "Ever . . . never; ever . . . never—Everlasting . . . Never-ending." This would be indeed DAMNATION. It pictures a scene of darkness, distance, misery, and wretchedness; and all the fruit of sin, folly, and unbelief. The unbeliever has his part there just because he would not come to Jesus.

Oh, may God in His infinite mercy deliver you from such a fate, from a night without a morning: may He lead you now to bow to Jesus, to confess His name, for we read in Romans x.: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from

the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness ; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." SALVATION is worth having. DAMNATION who would not avoid?

Happy would it be for you if you could say to me as a young woman said lately after a gospel meeting. She became concerned about her soul through tumbling into a tank, and being nearly drowned. She came up to me after the meeting (I had been preaching on Matthew xxv.) with a beaming face, saying, "I want to tell you that I have got oil to-night." "What do you mean by that?" I said. She joyfully replied, "I have come to the Lord this evening, and He has saved me, and I have got the oil—the Holy Ghost." She was decided for Christ, and received salvation. Be you decided also!

Oh, let me, in conclusion, most affectionately beseech you to come now to the Lord Jesus. He will receive, bless, and save you, just as you are, and a "morning without clouds" will then be yours.

God grant, dear friend, that you and I may meet in glory by-and-by, to ever praise the grace that has saved us, and given us eternal association with His dear Son. Amen!